

## Deanery Synod Report - APCM 17 May 2026

Deanery Synod remains the vital bridge connecting all local parishes, acting as an intermediary between each PCC and the Diocesan Synod. Its focus on Mission and Ministry, as well as mutual areas of concern and interest, ensures a robust channel for information exchange through presentations, discussions, and debates. Occasionally, the Synod makes decisions on behalf of the wider community and also forms the electorate for Diocesan and General Synod elections, which usually take place in the autumn – and we are anticipating one soon.

The Synod comprises both clergy and lay members, elected for a three-year term, with meetings jointly chaired by the Area Dean and the elected Lay Chair. Throughout the past year, clergy and lay readers have worked collaboratively to strengthen ministry, deepen discipleship, and address local needs. Public worship remains central to our deanery's life, with regular Sunday and midweek gatherings, as well as seasonal celebrations such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, all well attended. However, there is a recognised need for more participation and growth, particularly in online and digital worship, along with greater collaborative work among parishes and inter-denominational efforts – for example, partnerships with Catholic and Methodist congregations.

This year saw several community-focused events, including the Lay Ministry Taster Day, Deanery Lay Vocational Day, and a particularly welcomed Autism Awareness Day. Team support continues to be a priority, falling within the remit of the pastoral team and clergy, and our efforts to strengthen relationships beyond the regular congregation have been recognised. Notably, we held collaborative baptism sessions with the local Catholic Church.

Clergy vacancies were successfully filled, including the appointment of St. Edwards the Confessor on 7th February, and the warm welcome extended to Richard McGrath and their family in April.

Looking ahead, there will be a pilgrimage to Walsingham in May, sponsored by St Luke's, and a walk on 4th May involving several churches: Holy Trinity at 10:15, St Luke's at 11:30, St Andrew's from 12:30 to 1pm, and St John's around 2pm. The Good Friday walk was also well attended.

The APCM is scheduled for May, and the usual timetable has already been sent to all PCC Secretaries from the Diocesan Secretary.

As you may know, Bishop Christopher Chessun will be retiring this summer after many years of dedicated leadership, and the search for the next Bishop has begun. A consultation survey was circulated in March, with a closing date of 1 April. Additionally, The Revd Ian Welch from St Andrew's and St Albans will be retiring at the end of April 2026.

Deanery Synod election papers were distributed and are scheduled to coincide with the APCMs in May. They will be electing General Synod members in December, and the agreed number of representatives has been circulated to all parishes via the Synod. The General Synod elections, the National Assembly of the Church of England, will take place in 2026. This is the National and international which formulates new forms of worship, matters of National and international importance as well as the setting and approval of the

annual budget for the next five years. Further details will be communicated nearer the time.

Currently the debate is about church growth as the Diocese is struggling financially. There is a need therefore for some serious strategic thinking within the parishes as to how funds would be raised and grow our parishes.

By and large it has been a productive year however there needs to be some more engagement with other churches and a lot more collaborative work to include the Local communities within the Deanery

**Alberta Rosenior**

Deanery Synod Member, St John the Baptist, Eltham

April 2026

# Safeguarding Annual Report to Trustees

**Organisation** – St John the Baptist, Eltham

**Reporting period:** May 2025 – May 2026

**Safeguarding Leads:** Alberta Rosenior & Yvonne Watkins Knight

**Date:** March 2026

## **Purpose of Report:**

This report is presented to Trustees at The Annual APCM meeting in May 2026. This is to assure the safeguarding effectiveness in all the safeguarding arrangements across the organisation.

It outlines compliance with Statutory obligations, internal safeguarding practices and areas for continued developments

## **Safeguarding Governance and Oversight**

Safeguarding remains a strong priority within the church governance framework.

Oversight has been maintained throughout.

Application of safeguarding policies and procedures, ongoing monitoring by safeguarding officers.

Appropriate reporting and escalation where appropriate of Safeguarding concerns

Trustees are asked to note that safeguarding responsibilities have been carried out in line with regulatory expectations and organisational policies.

## **Safeguarding Audit and Compliance**

During the reporting period, we progressed from Level 1 to Level 2 safeguarding status

This is evidenced as:

Strengthened procedural compliance

Improved documentation and record keeping practices

Increased organisational awareness of safeguarding responsibilities among all

More robust internal accountability, which shows a positive step in embedding safeguarding in operation and governing priority

## **Safer Recruitment and DBS compliance**

With regards to safer recruitment policies the PCC has maintained full compliance with safer recruitment requirements where necessary.

All volunteers engaged in regulated activity have undergone appropriate DBS checks

A centralised record of DBS status is maintained and reviewed periodically

No Individuals have been permitted to undertake regulated activity without appropriate clearance.

Thus providing Trustees with assurance that preventative controls are in place

## **Incident Management and Regulatory Reporting**

All safeguarding concerns arising during this reporting period have been:

Recorded in a timely and appropriate manner

Assessed in accordance with safeguarding procedures

Escalated where necessary.

Where incidents met the reporting threshold, they would be **formally reported to the**

**Charity Commission** in line with serious incident reporting requirements.

Trustees should be aware that this reflects a commitment to transparency, regulatory compliance and good governance practice.

## **Safeguarding in operational contexts**

Safeguarding process has been consistently applied across all Organisational activities

Older Group Sunday school has been identified as an area of particular focus. Safeguarding practices have been actively implemented and monitored. Age -specific safeguarding considerations have been recognised and addressed. This reflects a proactive approach to safeguarding within higher-risk or more complex engagement settings.

## **Training and Organisational Awareness**

Safeguarding awareness has been reinforced throughout the year through

**New Initiative** - Reporting Serious Incidents to the Charity commission as of March 2026

**Serious Incident Summary / Table - Reporting period to be introduced as the year progresses and incidents occur**

### **Incident Summary reporting**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Nature of Incident</b> | <b>Action Taken</b> | <b>Reported to Charity Commission</b> | <b>Outcome/ Status</b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|

Trustees, please note that all incidents have been managed in accordance with Safeguarding policy, with regards to appropriate escalation and documentation.

### **Training and Awareness**

Safeguarding awareness has been maintained through the following channels:

Regular communication of responsibilities

Reinforcement of reporting procedures

Vigilance across the board

Further training planned to strengthen awareness and competency

### **Key Priorities for the next Reporting period**

Continue to deliver structured safeguarding Training

Strengthen Consistency in safeguarding practice

Maintain high standards of documentation

Enhance safeguarding provision for older children and youths when we do have them

### **Trustee Assurance and conclusion**

We Assess the current safeguarding framework as effective and compliant with clear levels and evidence of improvement – Obtaining Level 2 in the annual audit.

Progression to level 2 audit status, full DBS compliance and adherence to Charity Commission reporting requirements provide Trustees with the assurance that safeguarding risks are actively managed.

Continued Trustee oversight will remain essential and a priority in sustaining and strengthening the safeguarding culture.

**Churchwardens Report**  
APCM 2026  
Parish - St John the Baptist, Eltham

This report is presented to the PCC Trustees with gratitude for God's faithfulness over the last twelve months

The year has been a period of positive clergy stability, steady growth and serving the congregation. There are still some challenges concerning the building project and the heating, but we continue to uphold the mission and ministry of the church.

Worship, spiritual life and regular services have continued throughout the year including:

- Sunday Eucharist and family services and special children's services
- Midweek services on Thursdays
- Special services at Christmas and Easter, baptisms, weddings and funerals, including cremations and burials

We are grateful to all who contribute to worship, including clergy, readers, intercessors, choristers and musicians, as well as all who volunteer and support the church and children's church - older and younger children (Diddy Disciples).

Attendance has been stable and is steadily increasing with ongoing encouragement for new families and individuals alike.

Pastoral care and community is a key element of the church vision. Support for members of the congregation and the wider community has continued through the year with:

- Home visits and Communion
- Pastoral support during illness and bereavement
- Community outreach initiatives
- Partnership with local organisations and the church school.

We recognise the importance of strengthening connections within and beyond connections

Safeguarding is rightly an essential church policy, being a requirement of the Church of England and the Charity Commission of England and Wales. Increased focus throughout the year has resulted in:

- All relevant volunteers have now undertaken DBS checks
- Safeguarding Training has been completed at appropriate levels.
- Concerns have been handled in accordance with established procedures
- Records of incidents have been appropriately maintained and where necessary reported and victims and perpetrators dealt with according to prescribed procedures.

We are grateful to the parish Safeguarding Officers for their diligence and commitment.

Fabric and Property Church wardens are responsible for the care of the church buildings and its contents. During the year routine maintenance, repairs and inspections were undertaken where needed.

This has included some replacement works to the downpipes and guttering to the north side of the church

Rodent droppings have been removed from the loft above the Church Hall and the area was disinfected.

Whilst ongoing maintenance needs have continued to be met within the constraints of the current financial position the future emphasis has been placed on restoration of the heating system and associated improvement project.

Health and safety The church's vision is to ensure that the church remains a safe environment. Risk assessments are being reviewed and updated as an ongoing process. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked and compliance with health and safety regulations has been maintained.

Administration and Governance The churchwardens always work closely with the PCC to ensure effective governance and compliance with legal and ecclesiastical requirements

Key areas include:

- Regular PCC meetings held
- Financial oversight maintained
- Policies reviewed, updated when and where necessary, and published on the church website.

Volunteers and Thanks are extended to all volunteers who contribute to the life of the church including, the clergy; churchwardens, sidespeople, welcomers, cleaners, flower arrangers, and maintenance teams, Diddy Disciples and older children group leaders. It should be noted that the church depends greatly on your dedication and service

Challenges and Opportunities

This year has presented a number of challenges and in particular the continuing lack of a church heating system. Nonetheless there are clear opportunities, including the possibility of growing a youth church (14-17 year olds), more community engagements and developing online participation with the older community.

Conclusions

We remain committed to serving our church community faithfully and supporting the ongoing mission of the Parish

Churchwardens : Alberta Rosenor and Andrew Mcgechie  
March 2026

## **Fabric Report 2025**

### Terrier and Inventory

There have been no major acquisitions nor any disposals of significant Church property. All the normal routine inspections have been undertaken and the relevant certificates are available for inspection.

### Log Book

The usual routine maintenance has been undertaken. This has included some repairs and replacement works to the downpipes and guttering to the north side of the church. Rodent droppings have been removed from the loft space above the Church Hall and had the area disinfected. However, there remains an ongoing problem with rodent infestation. A regulatory device has been fitted to the Church clock which prevents it from chiming late at night until early in the morning which in the past has given rise to noise nuisance complaints. Henceforth, after the midnight chimes, the clock will not start chiming again until 7am.

The regulatory device was paid for by the Royal Borough of Greenwich but they are unwilling to fund future maintenance and regulation and have suggested that we apply to the Greenwich Neighbourhood Fund for grant aid.

### Organ

It is pleasing to report that there have been no major maintenance problems with the organ this year. Routine maintenance and tuning takes place twice a year.

### Faculties

The Church has applied for two faculties in respect of works related to CCTV and a burglar alarm. These works are necessary in order to improve security and are in line with the professional advice we have received. The safety features are a result of our successful application to the Places of Worship Government Scheme in 2023. A further faculty has been sought retrospectively in connection with the clock regulator.

### Church Yard and Community Payback Scheme

Workers under the supervision of the Community Payback Scheme have continued clearance and maintenance work in the Church Yard and the fruits of their work are plain for all to see. They also undertake other minor jobs in and around the Church. Last year children from the school together with a couple of members of the congregation planted some spring bulbs in the front of the Church. There is plenty of scope for further planting in the coming autumn.

### Lettings

The Church will not be able to maximise the opportunities for income generation via lettings until we have fully overcome our heating problems but it remains the long-term aim to generate much needed income from this source while at the same time enhancing our position at the centre of the local community.

### Tom Winter

I am pleased to report that Tom Winter will now be taking over the main responsibility the maintenance and upkeep of Church.

Dorian Woodward  
March 2026

## ORGANIST'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2025-2026

### A year in choral music at St John's: 2025-2026

The past year was marked by a number of high points for music-making, as efforts to revive our church as a centre for music within the wider community have continued apace. I will first set out a few highlights from the choir's activities this year.

Crowning all was the 150th anniversary festival evensong, when our choir was joined by singers from across south-east London to form a chorus of around 40 voices. The grand finale of Sir Hubert Parry's anthem '*I Was Glad*', a piece which has graced every coronation of a British monarch since 1902, was a fitting tribute to 150 years of our 'church on the hill'. One of many enjoyable aspects of the service was that three 'generations' of St John's organists (my predecessors Francis Eastwood and Herman Jordaan, and myself) all performed together.

Huge thanks are owed to all the singers, including guests from St Mary's Plumstead, Eltham Choral Society, the St Cecilia Festival Chorus, and the Grove Singers. I am happy to report that a number of those guest singers have been eager to re-join us for this year's festival evensong in June. Particular thanks must go to Simon Hiller (director of music at St Mary's Plumstead) and our own Beverley Howard, who both helped me organise and recruited singers, Andy & Liz McGeachie and Francis Eastwood who also recruited singers, as well of course as our other wonderful choir members and friends of our choir.

The annual Carol Service was another great highlight of the year, and a new advertising strategy spearheaded by Revd Jo helped secure a record number of attendees: thank you Jo!

More recently, the church's Holy Week worship was marked by a new approach to the choir's participation in the Maundy Thursday evening mass/vigil service. This service is always a particularly moving one for me personally, so (with Rvd Caroline's kind permission) I made efforts this year to try to make it an especially atmospheric occasion. The church was arrayed with candles and the lights set low for the service, to promote a reflective atmosphere. We were blessed with a great turnout for the choir, including some guest singers who came to assist us. At the end of the service, the choir adjourned to the Lady Chapel to sing settings of the *Nunc Dimittis* and Psalm 22 by Joseph A. Kucharski. Whilst the choir sang, the altar was stripped and the lights of the church were dimmed further to create what one congregation member very kindly described to us as a 'moving and spiritual' atmosphere. We had a lot of wonderful feedback, and I hope to establish this as a new musical tradition for the Maundy Thursday service going forwards, possibly with the option in future years for congregation members to stay behind post-service if they wish to sit (or kneel) and observe the vigil by candlelight for a time.

A new and particularly special musical occurrence took place on Mothering Sunday, 15th March, when the Blackbirds children's choir joined forces with the church choir for the first time in singing L.J. White's 'A Prayer of St Richard of Chichester'. The children did fantastically well, singing with great confidence. The progress that Liz and Beverley (who have set up and run the choir themselves) have made with these young singers is amazing. Plans are underway to advertise for the Blackbirds in other schools in and around the parish, and I have great hopes that the numbers will grow considerably over the coming year as parents cotton on to what an opportunity it is to have their children tutored by two brilliant musicians (for free!)

Finally in relation to choir activities it must be said that, week by week, it feels as if our church choir continues to grow ever stronger and more confident. We have been blessed with a new Soprano who joined us last year, Sophie, and who is making a huge contribution; we were however saddened to lose Charlotte Snell who has moved away from the Parish (but who may make a special guest appearance in June's evensong!) As ever, I cannot give enough thanks and praise to Beverley, who does so much for the choir - but all my thanks to every one of our singers. It's a joy to be a part of your music-making.

Currently we are beginning rehearsals for our upcoming festival evensong, at 6pm on Sunday 21 June, with Bishop Christopher in attendance. We are being joined once again by guest singers from the area, and we look forward to seeing you there if you can make it!

### **The organ**

As the temperature warms, the organ seems to be coming back into decent health again after a long winter. The instrument does continue to suffer very badly over the winter months due to the cold and damp resulting from the lack of heating in the church; this creates ciphers (notes sounding without any keys being pressed) and other significant issues.

The current status of the proposed organ renovation project is that it is on-hold, understandably, whilst the church focuses on the immediate problem of building renovations and new heating. In the meantime there is plenty of work for our regular organ tuners and maintainers from Harrison & Harrison, who visit twice a year.

### **Patronal Festivals to come**

This year (2026) for the first time I have begun making real efforts towards establishing a series of concerts for the June patronal festival, including an annual organ recital that would take place during the festival. In years gone by, musical performances were a significant part of the patronal festival, and I hope that this part of the church's heritage can also be revived in due course. Whether anything will happen in time for this June is still TBD; stay tuned!

### **Concerts in church**

A final word to give huge thanks to all who have worked to make concerts in the church happen over the past year; Andy & Liz with the Greenwich Concert Band (11th October 2025) and Eltham Choral Society (12 July 2025), Francis Eastwood with the St Cecilia Festival Chorus (22 November 2025 and 3 April 2026), and of course a dazzling recorder recital by James Risdon (8 June 2025). With apologies for those I will have failed to include.

In summary, it has been a fantastic year for music at church. Thank you as ever to Revd Caroline and the whole clergy team, without whose support none of this would be possible. Roll on 2025-26!

**Theo Lester**

**Organist & Director of Music**

30 April 2026