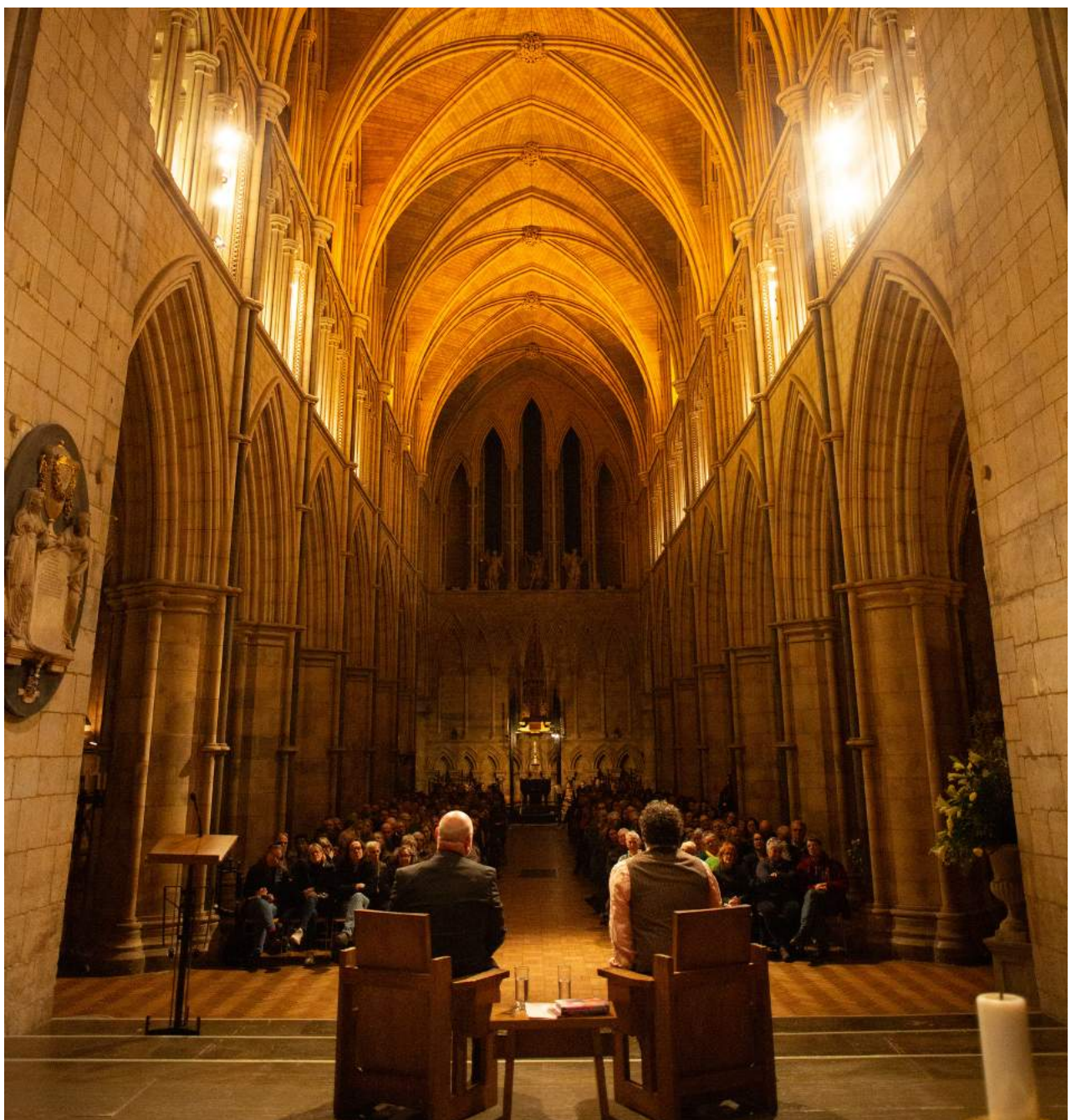


# SOUTHWARK

## ◆ CATHEDRAL ◆

### The Dean's Report 2026



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# The Dean's Report

The Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley

*In July 1905, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra attended the inauguration service of Southwark Cathedral. The preacher, the Bishop of London, chose as his subject 'Things old and new'.*

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'Today', he said, 'the old church of St Mary Overie becomes the new Cathedral of the Diocese of Southwark, and the promise of its future seems to outshine the glory of its past. Today we launch this old ship on its new voyage; may the favouring wind of God's Holy Spirit fill her sails and bear the good ship on its way to discharge its mission of love and mercy to the world'.

I'm moved to read these words by Bishop Arthur Winnington-Ingram who had only been Bishop of London for four years when he preached at Southwark, but who, just a few years later, was taking services for the troops on the Western Front under shellfire. I love the image of the 'favouring wind of God's Holy Spirit' that fills our sails so that we can fulfil our mission of 'love and mercy to the world'. It is good to know that the Cathedral's current Vision of 'making space for love' is very much in tune with our beginnings as a Cathedral for south London.

It is that Vision, launched in 2025, that we have been working, as a Chapter and as a Senior Leadership Team (SLT), to make a reality. It is, of course, a five year plan that

we are initially working to, and we can sometimes rush to try and make everything happen at once! It is good to see so much happening that is positive – and I hope that when you read the reports which follow you'll see lots of good and encouraging news that should make us thankful to God and to each other. Please do take a look at the Cathedral's Annual Report, which we publish as a Charity, on the website, for more reporting on many aspects of the Cathedral's life and mission.

I'm always very aware that you can only ever get out of bed in the morning and be a Dean by having expertise, advice, kindness and friendship, around you when you get to work. I am so grateful that I do – and in bucket loads! I have amazing clergy colleagues who work so collaboratively and with a sense of fun. The Chapter is comprised of wise and experienced folk who, as their duty demands, scrutinise the work of the SLT, as well as function as critical friends to ensure the governance and compliance of the Cathedral as a Charity is healthy and fit for purpose. We have many who work on various Committees and Groups who, likewise, bring their knowledge and enthusiasm to the table for the sake of the Cathedral's life.

We have two wonderful Cathedral Wardens in Linda and Kristin, always working to ensure that the voice of the congregation is heard and listened to, and the community of our Cathedral is welcoming, hospitable and purposeful. We have stellar vergers who are the worker bees that keep the hive healthy.



We also have nearly 400 volunteers, without whom the Cathedral could not do what it does. I can't thank them enough for the commitment they offer, and all the good things which come out of that. The staff who work through the week are talented and give their all for the Cathedral, so often beyond what might be expected, and they work together well to make sure the ship is buoyant as well as on course.

Talking of the staff, we have said goodbye to some through 2025. Bill Murphy, EA to the Dean, John Dollin, Head of Visitor Engagement, Sally Oliver, EA to the COO, and Christina Guerrero, Events Assistant, all moved on to new work or to go travelling. Some event Stewards also said goodbye after many years of service. We thank Margaret Busgith, Richard Roaf, Sebastian Simpson-Bandidin, Eleanor Harrison and Susan Strong very much. We also were upset that Hannah Thomas, a welcome Host, moved over the river to St Paul's – but she keeps in touch because we are still her home!

Of course, it was also very significant that after 33 years Paul Timms retired as Dean's verger. Paul served the Cathedral with remarkable dedication and built up such a

large network of friends and contacts, that he became nearly as famous as Hodge. We wish him a peaceful retirement.

We were delighted to welcome new members of the team too. Deborah Frank became an events Steward, Rosie Ward joined as PA to the Dean, Neil Morter was appointed as Safeguarding Officer, and Millie Cole began as a verger. It was also great to welcome Helen Smee as the new Director of Music. We also have a new Fabric Advisory Committee as every five years it refreshes itself and I am hugely thankful for the impressive women and men serving on the Committee. Their advice and guidance for the preservation and development of the fabric of the Cathedral is indispensable.

I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking Kate Dean and all the committee and volunteers of the Friends of Southwark Cathedral. The programme they create is always varied and imaginative, and I know how valued their tours and pilgrimages are by so many. We are lucky to have such a committed Friends community and, if you haven't yet joined, please do!

We had another excellent Sleep Out for Robes this year and it was good to see so many young people join in. I have joined the volunteers for Robes and have seen for myself now what wonderful work they do. The guests, who have no home, are treated with deep respect, their clothes are washed, dinner and breakfast is served, and they are helped with various needs before they make their way into another day. The Cathedral has a good number of volunteers who help to make all this happen, maintaining night shelters when the weather is at its worst. Please do think about joining them. If you can wash up, cook, or serve food – you can do it! Our partnership with Robes is precious. and it is lifegiving for some of the most vulnerable in our city.

I was very grateful to Delorine Green for pastoring St Hugh's church for a period, before beginning her work as a parish priest of St Augustine's, Grove Park. I'm also grateful to the Wardens of St Hugh's and to all the clergy who kindly celebrate the eucharist there on Sunday mornings. Discussions are under way as to how the life and witness of St Hugh's should be maintained and structured. Please keep the people of St Hugh's, and the many children who worship there, in your prayers.

I never expect any sermon of mine to go viral but the one I preached at the end of October took off somewhat. I received nearly 2500 communications after it, most supportive, and many letters were deeply moving and personal. I was highlighting what I consider to be the continued homophobia of the Church of England. It seems to me to be unjust that, for instance, our gay clergy cannot enter marriage without it immediately entailing they cannot move to another ministry anywhere as a licence will not be given. Potential ordinands who are married will not be trained or ordained.

It is wrong that we cannot have standalone services at which two people who love each other and who want to promise to grow old together, can be blessed, supported, and encouraged by family, friends and the Christian community. Personally, I also look forward to the day when we will be a Church where same-sex couples will be able to marry and begin their new life with prayer and love surrounding them.

After many years of the Church discussing Living In Love and Faith, it sadly came to an end with remarkably little progression, except for some authorised prayers provided to be used at a regular service. We did exactly this for Michael Rawson and Neil Tryner this year, after they entered a Civil Partnership, and I cannot think of a happier day in the whole 2025 calendar! Our Vision is to make space for love. I am committed, with you, to help the Church do this better and without apology. Where love is, God is, and we should be able to celebrate this beautiful fact. I know that Southwark Cathedral will continue to speak up and alongside those who are feeling alienated and shamed by the Church on this, and many other, issues. I am proud of this and will do what I can to make this a Cathedral and a Church for all.

On 21st April Pope Francis sadly died and it was good to go with colleagues to St George's Cathedral to be with our friends there as they remembered him at Vespers. Francis took the name of the saint from Assisi who reminded us that we can take nothing with us from this world that we have received. We can only take with us what we have given. By 8th May, a new Pope was elected. Leo XIV has, to my mind, started very well and is not afraid to bring the Gospel and Christian values into the public arena, no matter how vilified he can be for it.

Pope Leo often describes the love of God as ‘unarmed’ and ‘disarming’. These are apt words at a time when we are over-armed and the consequences of violence and war are too predictable. I thank God for Fr Michael Branch, Dean of St George’s Cathedral, and for his community, and feel blessed to have such good relationships with them all. Very early on in office, Pope Leo said to members of the diplomatic corps, ‘Peace is built in the heart and from the heart, by eliminating pride and vindictiveness and carefully choosing our words’. All of us need to hear this, especially as we try to live in a Christian and prayerful community.

In early October, it was announced that the Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullaly, would be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. She is a great lover of Southwark, and known to us here quite well. To be the first woman in this office is a significant and costly call and we keep her in our prayers. I was delighted to represent us all at her installation in March 2026 at Canterbury Cathedral and, before that, on her pilgrimage to Canterbury, to pray for God’s blessing on her - as Southwark Cathedral was her first stop.

It is part of the Cathedral’s Vision to have a social justice focus through each year. 2025 had ‘Modern Slavery’ as the area we wanted to explore, raise awareness of, and seek to work with some of its survivors. We delivered the programme in partnership with the charity Hestia, which is the largest provider of modern slavery support in London and the surrounding counties. We also worked with The Passage, the Clewer Initiative, Southwark Against Modern Slavery, and the Medaille Trust. We held talks, events, exhibitions, workshops, training sessions, podcasts and participatory choral, art and craft activities for survivors.

It was especially poignant to have two concerts given by the Amies Freedom Choir, a choir of women with lived experience of trafficking and slavery. The café had an exhibition of art painted and drawn by survivors and when I met some of them, they were so moved that their work should find itself on public display at a Cathedral. One woman wept with real joy.

Our podcast series developed through 2025. Do listen in! You’ll find conversations with Dame Mary Beard, Sir Ed Davey, Sir Antony Seldon, Stella Kanu, Archbishop Sarah, and many others. There is also one with the philanthropist John Studzinski on modern slavery and what we should do as consumers in the light of the reality. Also, there is a very affecting conversation with Manni Coe, a survivor of clerical abuse who never thought he would go near a church or talk to a priest ever again. His conversation with me at the Cathedral has stayed with me.



By the time of next year's Report, our Bishop Christopher will have retired. We look forward to a service of thanksgiving and farewell on July 18th. I recently wrote in the 'Church Times':

'Tony Blair used to say that when you begin as Prime Minister you're at your most popular and least effective. When you leave, you're at your least popular and most effective. I suspect it's true of most jobs. However, as our own Bishop of Southwark prepares to retire, I'm conscious that he's as popular and as effective as he ever was. As T.S. Eliot observed, most of the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. The Church, with its hierarchies and processions, is a place that makes it easy for many of us to feel superior in some way - and then to show it in some ways that are a long way from Nazareth. To have a bishop resistant to all this is a real blessing, and I hope the next one will model Christian formation in the same way. It was Ignatius of Antioch who said that when the priests and people of God are fitted to the bishop 'as the strings are to the harp', it is in 'their concord and harmonious love that Jesus Christ is sung'.

No bishop has been more supportive of the Cathedral than Bishop Christopher. We will miss him very much but are pleased that he is only going across the river to St Mary's, Bourne Street. Please pray for him as he prepares to step down and please do remember those called to discern the person to be our next Bishop. To help call us all back to our Christian faith and vocation will be essential, when so much in the culture works against it. As the American biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann wrote:

'The crisis in the Church has nothing to do with being liberal or conservative; it has everything to do with giving up on the faith and discipline of our Christian baptism and settling for a common generic identity that is part patriotism, part consumerism, part violence, and part affluence.'

Canon Jeremy told us in his sermon about Mr Muste, who stood outside the Whitehouse during the Vietnam War holding a candle and was challenged as to whether he really thought he'd change the world like that. Mr Muste replied, 'I'm not here to change the world. I'm here to make sure the world doesn't change me'. Our Christian formation demands we keep alert to how the world might be shaping us and not bringing out our better selves or the grace and kindness that is so needed.

I am now in my third year as Dean. Thank you so much, from the depths of my heart, to each and every one of you, for all that you do to make this Cathedral a place of blessing and welcome to so many. Thank you for bearing with my mistakes and foibles. Thank you for bringing your gifts, kindness, and time to help make us the sort of Cathedral we want to be. I really believe that, to use those words from 1905, that God's Spirit is filling our sails as we make our journey to bring love and mercy to this fractured world. May God bless us as we sail together.

# Stand Out Moments

2025





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# Chapter

Gill Reynolds, Senior Non-Executive Member

## *2025 marked the first year of implementing the new Cathedral Vision and Strategy agreed at the end of 2024.*

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This renewed statement of direction has enabled Chapter to focus on key priorities, not only work that needed to be completed in 2025 but also preparatory work for the next 3-4 years.

It has been a very busy year with growing numbers in our congregations and a significant increase in overall visitor numbers, both of which are encouraging for developing our life and presence in the local community and further afield. We are very grateful for our Committees and Working Groups who have worked hard this year to support Chapter in its governance role.

Chapter is always mindful of the need to balance our core Cathedral mission as a place of worship and welcome with the need for income generation. Income has increased during the year with substantial contributions from special events, a programme aimed at encouraging visitor numbers, wider rollout of card machines to encourage donations and a good level of activity in the shop and café. Recognising the importance of welcoming visitors as warmly as we can, we are revitalising our Visitor Engagement team with the aim of understanding better who visits us and planning ways to help them engage with our mission and contribute to our life here. Linked to this is the work of the Heritage

Working Group who continue to develop thinking and plans for how we present the Cathedral to visitors.

Nonetheless, finances continue to be challenging (eg rising repair and maintenance costs) and we have had to make considerable investment in our residential and commercial properties this year to ensure compliance with recent legislation. Working with the Diocese, we have an interested party currently undertaking a feasibility study into the potential transformation of All Hallows' Church into an educational facility. We are hopeful for a positive outcome.

Looking forward, one of our main challenges is to find additional sources of finance to enable us to widen our work in social justice and to undertake more substantial improvements to our entrances and perimeter, as well as work to the Harvard Chapel to improve access and enhance its use. For 2026 we have planned for a balanced budget, only spending on improving our buildings and fabric when we are confident that we have a sufficient financial buffer against unforeseeable events.

Our aspirations for our Cathedral life rely not only on sufficient resources being available but also on continuing to ensure that this is a safe place for all. Chapter takes its responsibilities for Safeguarding very seriously and ensures Safeguarding is part of every Chapter meeting.

We look forward to an interesting, challenging, fruitful and inspiring year ahead.

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# Safeguarding

The Reverend Canon Kathryn Fleming, Chapter Safeguarding Lead

*Safeguarding in the 2025 calendar year was mainly notable for some changes in the team. In November we were delighted to welcome Neil Morter, who joined us from a role as Safeguarding Lead at MacMillan Cancer Support, to be our first professional Cathedral Safeguarding Officer.*

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The impact of his calm and kind presence in the team has been tremendous, both in our day to day operations and overwhelmingly in our preparations for the INEQE Safeguarding Audit which is approaching in June.

Neil was commissioned to his role on Safeguarding Sunday, alongside 3 volunteers – now named Cathedral Safeguarding Reps – Jill Tilley and Cherry James continuing in role, but joined by Russell Silverwood, as Helen Quintrell stepped down (becoming in our thoughts at least CS Rep Emerita). She has done a wonderful job, particularly in delivering and shaping training to the Cathedral context, and we are tremendously grateful to her and to the rest of the team.

During the year 21 members of staff and 134 volunteers completed or renewed safeguarding training. This training is renewed every three years, so there is always more to do, and Neil will be delivering much of the training post-audit, alongside Jill where this is practical. Eleanor Davies, our Governance Officer, has made an outstanding contribution in gathering and co-ordinating evidence and submitting responses to the extremely detailed 360 review for the INEQE audit, and we are so grateful for this work.

During the year we formalised our excellent relationship with the diocesan Safeguarding team via a Memorandum of Understanding– and that relationship remains strong as the new DSO, Michael Browne, started work just after Neil – who is seconded to the diocesan offices for one day a week at present.

With a good team in place in both cathedral and diocese we continue to do everything possible to ensure that the Cathedral remains “a safe and welcoming place for all”.



# Finance Report

Daniel Chumbley, Chair of the Finance Committee

*A cautiously positive financial picture. Strong income growth, improved levels of donations and commercial activity, balanced against continued structural cost pressures and the need for sustainable long term income generation.*

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## Summary of the year

The Cathedral Chapter has set itself an ambitious multi-year target to grow income and “trade” out of recent financial challenges to achieve a balanced operational budget so that income pays for running costs. It is also focussed on ensuring that costs are managed well. Our aim is to be deficit free in 2026 (a year ahead of our plan) if conditions allow.

Thanks to hosting a variety of popular events throughout the year and the footfall from neighbouring Borough Market, which is now one of the most visited places in London, we have successfully attracted a large increase in visitor numbers throughout 2025. This, together with increased card payment giving at services, has led to an 8% rise in donations from congregation and visitors

Major income generating events have also made a huge contribution but we need to focus on profit and loss analysis to ensure we maximise the return to balance the huge effort that goes into organising each event and hosting increased visitor numbers.

To fulfil our aim to manage our finances for the longer term, we are focussed on how to repair, maintain and improve our property portfolio after historic under investment. This remains challenging but we have invested significantly this year and have increased the number of properties in our portfolio that are commercially let. We continue to work on longer term spending forecasts and investment plans.

We have made good progress to secure the future of All Hallows Church, and are discussing proposals to receive income from it and cover maintenance costs thanks to continued dialogue with the Diocese and other external parties.

Cash reserves at the end of the year were slightly ahead of plan, these were bolstered by deposits for large events in January 2026.

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## The year ahead

We are acutely focussed on managing costs to work towards achieving a balanced budget and to fulfil our multi-year financial plan, but aware that recent economic instability may bring challenges. Thanks to our fundraiser who has worked hard to encourage funding from well-established relationships, we are keen to continue developing a broader fundraising strategy. We will also re-launch an initiative to encourage legacy giving.

The recruitment of audience development and digital marketing coordinators, both of which are funded by the Cathedral Sustainability Fund, will also help us continue to attract visitors as part of fulfilling our mission and strategy.

## Donations

The spirit of generosity lies at the heart of everything we are able to do. We thank everyone for all their contributions and support this year which has allowed us to continue our mission.

Being a member of the Parish Giving Scheme ([www.parishgiving.org.uk](http://www.parishgiving.org.uk)) allows us to continue to provide a secure and stable way for donors to give. Most of our regular givers have transferred their planned giving to the scheme and we encourage everyone who feels able to follow suit.

Donors have adapted hugely to contactless giving and this has led to higher donations and the technology that accompanies contactless payment devices allows us to better monitor and track income from our congregation and our visitors. However, with rising inflation and costs, we encourage everyone to re-consider what they are able to give. Here are the best ways to support us:

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### Setting up a regular donation

Regular ongoing support helps us to plan and sustain our care of this great Cathedral for the future.

[www.parishgiving.org.uk](http://www.parishgiving.org.uk)

### Making a one-off donation

Historic buildings always need support; from medieval stonework to our educational programmes, to maintaining our lovely garden - your gift will always make a difference.

### Leaving a gift in your will

One of the most effective ways you can support the Cathedral. Legacy gifts can be directed to support a chosen area of our work, or can be given free of restriction to enable them to be used where they are needed most.

### Supporting our music

Ask for a one-off donation to be used to support the Cathedral choir, our organ and all the music that you hear and experience at the Cathedral. Encourage learning and our young people – ask for a donation to be used to support educational activities and our work with young people.

### Becoming a volunteer

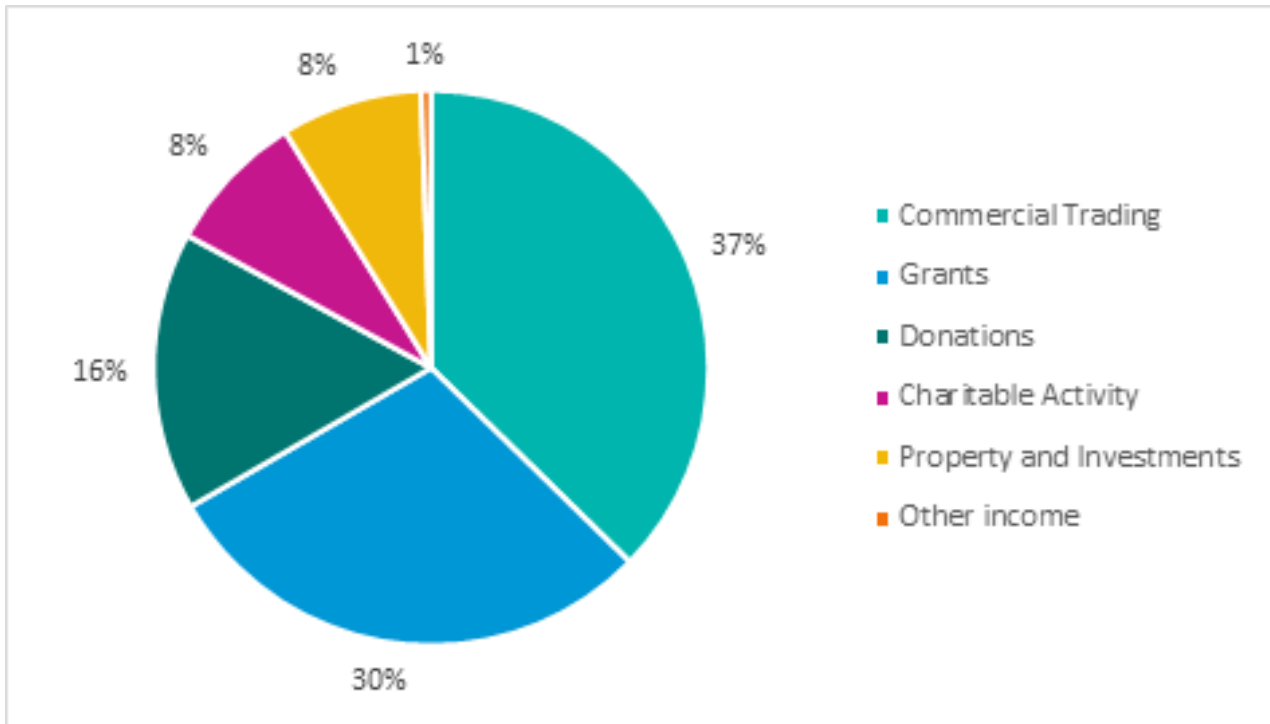
Join our team of committed and loyal volunteers to play a vital part in the day-to-day running of this busy and thriving place.

### Joining the Friends of Southwark Cathedral

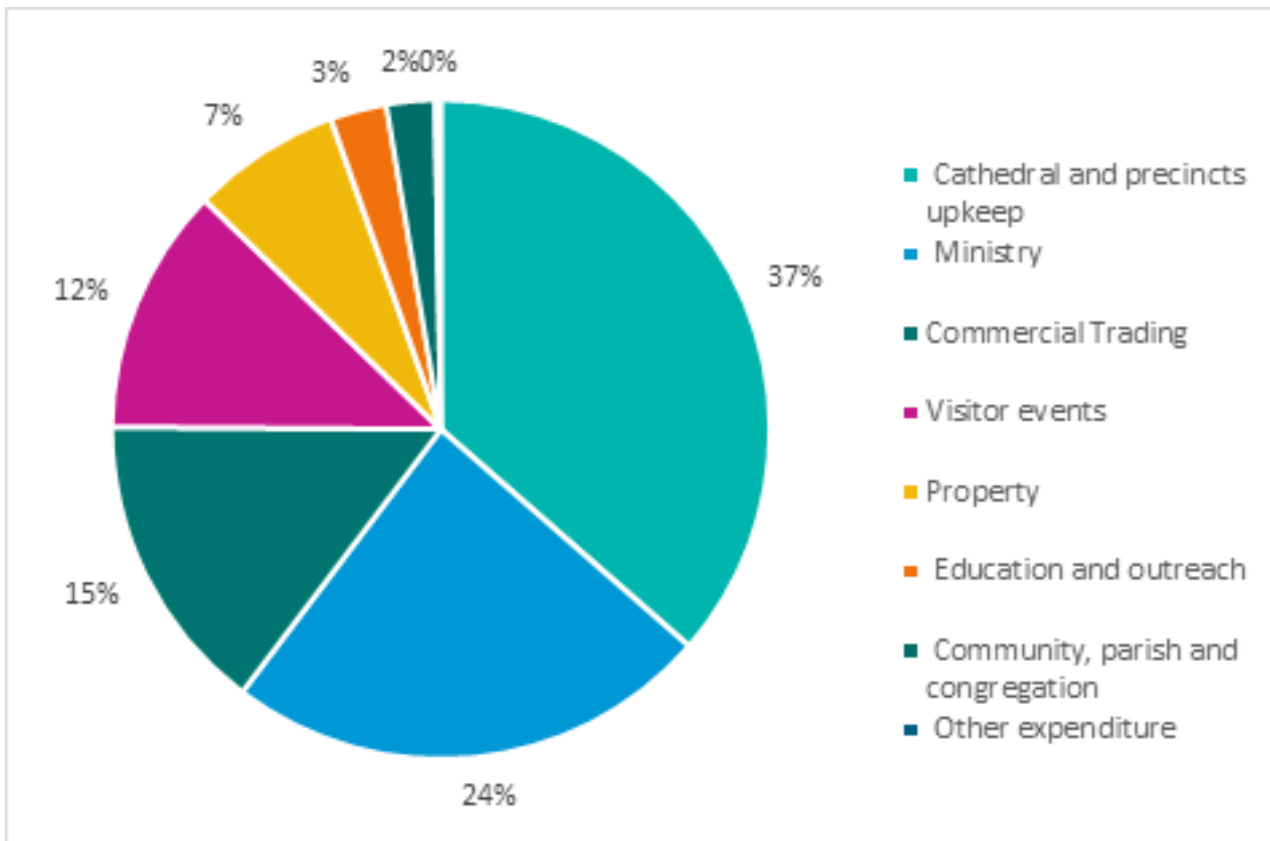
Sign up to support us, make new friends and enjoy events through the year. Find out more about your support by visiting our website: [www.cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/support-us](http://www.cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/support-us)

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## Income Breakdown



## Expenditure Breakdown



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# Southwark Cathedral Enterprises Limited

Richard Holman, Chair



## *2025 was a good year for the Cathedral's commercial arm.*

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Total revenue rose by £90K (9.7%) to £1.02m, the first time that it has exceeded the £1m mark, and the company's net profit, which it distributes to the Cathedral, was £490K, an improvement of £52K (12.0%) on 2024.

64% of the company's income was derived from events, 21% from the shop, 9% from meeting room hire and 6% came in the form of licence fees from the café.

Rose Harding has again brought in an eclectic mix of special events, providing immensely valuable income for the Cathedral while avoiding activities that unduly interrupt its life as a centre of Christian worship. In 2025 they included graduation ceremonies, school concerts, amateur and professional choir performances and corporate events.

UK Government tax breaks have been a factor in enticing film production companies to use the Cathedral. Enterprises received substantial location fees in September 2025 and a further two productions landed in January, which will be followed by one in April and one in May. This has already yielded 78% of the Events budget target for the 2026 financial year.

Notable occasions included a private dinner for Mercer Risk Management, a performance of Britten's War Requiem by The Outcry Ensemble, held on the eve of Remembrance Sunday, and the Churches Conservation Trust Annual Lecture with guest speaker Dan Jones, a popular British historian and TV presenter.

We are grateful to our excellent catering partners for their continuing support.

Despite Cristina Guerrero's best efforts, revenue from the letting of meeting

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rooms fell in 2025, partly due to financial pressures on our regular users. We are working on ways to improve the marketing of these spaces.

Alfie Roach has ensured that the shop has consolidated the progress that it achieved in 2024 as a result of the move to the current location. Turnover was similar to the previous year at £218K and work continues on expanding the product offering.

The Café, operated by our partners, Comptoir Gourmand, delivered a £4K increase in licence fees. They have continued to provide a friendly, reliable service and an attractive food offering to the congregation, visitors and staff.

The Board of Enterprises is very appreciative of the commitment and sheer hard work of everyone who contributes to the generating of commercial income for the Cathedral, including Paul Smith (Cathedral COO) and Ted Halshaw (CFO), who have made considerable improvements to the administration of the business and to the information provided to the Board.

I would particularly like to thank my fellow non-executive directors, Jessica Kingsley, Grant Tripp (who has again put in a great many voluntary hours in the shop) and Hanif Barma, for the time and expertise that they have contributed over the past year. Following a review of governance, we were very pleased to welcome two new directors, Gill Reynolds, a nominee of Chapter, and Nick Laws to the Board in February 2025. I completed fifteen years as a director (and latterly chair) and stood down from the Board in February 2026.

There has been an encouraging start to 2026 and we are on course to deliver a further increase in the contribution that Enterprises makes to the overall finances of the Cathedral.



# Visitor Engagement

Paul Smith, Chief Operating Officer

*Despite having gone through a transitional year with the departure of the previous head of department, visitor engagement at the Cathedral enjoyed a successful and busy year in 2025.*

By the end of the year, we had successfully hired Katie Beanland, from London Transport Museum, as our new Head of Engagement (a slightly revised role with a wider focus) brought in to help deliver our ambitious future programmes as part of our refreshed Vision.

Highlights of 2025 included the collaborative art installation (which involved the public writing prayers on thousands of paper doves) over the summer. This artwork from British sculptor, Peter Walker entitled “Peace Doves” brought nearly 45,000 visitors in six weeks over the summer.

The year also saw us deliver our first co-ordinated strand of social justice programming, focusing on modern slavery, including two modern slavery awareness days and an “Art is Freedom” exhibition from modern slavery charity, Hestia.

Visitor figures for the year also saw a healthy increase of 16% on 2024, to just under 300,000 visitors. This was helped by a generous and timely donation from the Cathedral Friends to invest in revitalising our signage and our signage light boxes.

Many engagement events were staged throughout the year, including talks, art

exhibitions and concerts. Some of the highlights included: a two-day History Festival, two “Big Knit” community knitting days (Summer and Christmas), a Women of the War of the Roses day, a Cromwell evening, an Icon painting course and an Icons on Ammunition Boxes exhibition, a Care Workers by Theos exhibition (including an illuminating talk with Sir Ed Davey), a Christmas concert by Jethro Tull and a sound and light installation from Lux Muralis.

Alongside these events, the team also delivered an array of other engagement activities including a series of Living Faithfully talks, a tours programme and a Guides training course to improve the skills and knowledge of our volunteers.



# Music

Helen Smee, Director of Music

*Music remains central to the life and worship of the Cathedral, enriching both our daily liturgy and major diocesan and civic occasions.*

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The Music department enjoyed a wonderful start to summer with a concert celebrating 25 years of the Cathedral Girls' Choir – a milestone for what was, at its founding, a unique opportunity for girls and young women in the Capital. The choir has since been joined by chorister opportunities for girls at many other London cathedrals and major churches, and the occasion was a chance to celebrate the advances in inclusion which have taken place not just here at the Cathedral but more widely.

The special gala concert featured repertoire composed for the choir, recent commissions, the anthem first performed by the founding choristers back in 2000, and two showstoppers – Rutter's Gloria and Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. It was great to welcome composer Philip Moore, and past Southwark musicians Peter Wright and Steven Disley, who spoke very highly of the choir's commitment to making music of the highest quality.

The Cathedral Choir, now numbers almost 60 young people alongside the

team of professional adult singers, and continues to provide an outstanding musical education to any child who shows potential. New initiatives in 2025 included a taster 'Be a Chorister for a Day' event for prospective choristers and their families, and we were delighted to catch up with former choristers, lay clerks and organists at the re-launch event of the Old Choristers' Association.

We are always delighted to hear from young people aged 7 or 8 who love music and might enjoy the life-changing opportunities which being a chorister offers! We have also enjoyed excellent performances and community events with both our auditioned Merbecke Choir, led by Emily Elias, and our un-auditioned Community Choir, which rehearses on Thursday lunchtimes; several joint events between the choirs have taken place, including a beautiful Epiphany Carol service – we look forward to a joint concert in July of music for choir and brass ensemble sung jointly by the Cathedral Choir and Merbecke Choir.

In September, I began as the Cathedral's new Director of Music, with Simon Hogan becoming Cathedral Organist. It has been a great joy to get to know the Cathedral community and the many people who support its music-making and vibrant liturgical life. Celebrating Christmas, Holy Week and Easter with such a passionate and committed team of musicians (and dedicated chorister families), it was clear that there are many highlights to look forward to in the coming years, and I'd like to thank Simon, James Gough and Emily Elias for all their work in 2025 which has supported and nourished our rich musical life, and for their warm and supportive welcome to Southwark.

The Choir undertook a number of other special services and concerts, with highlights including services to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity alongside our brothers and sisters from St George's RC Cathedral; a host of Christmas carol services and concerts for a range of

local and national organisations; and an outreach Evensong featuring choirs from across the Diocese. Our network of partner organisations and musical groups continues to grow, and we look forward to future opportunities to share the Cathedral's musical heritage with visitors and musical friends in a variety of contexts.

In October 2025, the Cathedral Choir saw a return to international touring, with a highly successful trip to the Netherlands undertaken by the Girl Choristers and Lay Clerks. A number of concerts and services took place in a range of stunning venues to warmly appreciative audiences and congregations, and the Department looks forward to touring with the Boy Choristers and Lay Clerks in the coming months.



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# Cathedral Stewards

Alison Brown, Lead Steward

*It has been another busy and positive year with the size of congregations increasing along with the number of visitors.*

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We currently have thirty-six active stewards most of whom regularly volunteer for at least one service a month, and it has been a pleasure to welcome four new stewards to the team. An induction programme for new stewards has been established by the committee which will be trialled and assessed during the coming year. During the collection the stewards are encouraging the congregation to pass the basket along the entire row to ensure that everybody has an equal opportunity to give. We are grateful for the new contactless machines which are more reliable than the older variety enabling the collection to be taken more effectively.

This year at least two members of the committee have met with the Precentor on a regular basis to plan and review large services. This has proved to be very helpful, and we thank her for her time and her recognition of the importance of working together.

The stewards were kindly invited to the Deanery in December at which we were made very welcome and gave us an opportunity to socialise together informally and was much enjoyed by all.

It was a privilege to be asked to steward Dame Jilly Cooper's Memorial and many positive comments were received following the event.

Christmas and Easter services were particularly busy, which was good to see, but presented the stewards with some challenges. We hope that people felt welcome and had an enjoyable and positive experience.

A training session was held for all stewards in March when John Ackland led a very useful and fun session on the skill of providing a good welcome. It was well attended, well received, and gave us much to think about.

The Stewards' Committee has met regularly during the year to plan and refine our practice in line with the developing needs of the Cathedral and its Vision.



# Volunteers

Sharda Rozena, Volunteers Officer

*The Cathedral benefits from a strong and committed volunteer team of 357 individuals, many of whom contribute across multiple roles.*

Volunteers undertake a diverse range of responsibilities both within the Cathedral and in the wider local community. Among the 32 roles within the Cathedral, there are pastoral duties like the Day Chaplains and Listeners who offer a caring presence in the Cathedral each day, visitor experience roles, including Stewards, Welcomers and Guides who provide welcome, support and knowledge to our visitors, and operational roles, like the Flower Arrangers, Bellringers, Finance Assistants, Music Library Volunteers and Receptionists who keep the Cathedral and its office running.

The Cathedral also has outward-facing volunteering opportunities that engage directly with the local community. These include work with the Cathedral's Learning Centre, which hosts visiting school groups, and participation in Robes Overnight Shelters, providing food and care for individuals experiencing homelessness. The Cathedral also collaborates with London universities to promote its volunteering programme. In September 2025, this included hosting the first 'Big Help Out' day in partnership with University College London (UCL), during which 25 students participated in conservation housekeeping activities.

We continue to welcome many new volunteers each year, with 72 people joining the team since May last year. We work closely with the safeguarding team to ensure that safer recruitment, training and inductions are provided for all new volunteers.

We ensure that Cathedral volunteers are also engaged with the Cathedral's vision. We have achieved this in several ways, including the annual Volunteers Forum which brings together volunteers and staff for shared learning and engagement. The Volunteers Officer also organises reciprocal visits with partner organisations to encourage community-building and knowledge exchange. Over the last year visits have been arranged with the Old Operating Theatre, the V&A and Lambeth Palace. In 2026, the reciprocal visits correspond with our social justice theme of 'literacy' and we started this with a tour of Dr Johnson's House in April, with further visits planned to Shakespeare's Globe and the British Library later this year.

A structured programme of volunteer training continues to support skills development and inclusive practice. In 2025, this included workshops on Sign Language and Deaf Awareness, as well as a Front of House visitor engagement session. Planned training for 2026 includes sessions on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

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# Learning Centre

Emily Harris, Learning Centre Manager

*Our Learning Centre continued to deliver a popular, lively and well-received school visit programme across all Key Stages for community and faith schools supporting curriculum delivery for Religious Education, History, Art and Design and Philosophy and Ethics.*

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## Highlights

- 4972 students per session (compared with 4747 last year) comprising 3945 primary and 1027 secondary students per session.
- Successful delivery of a new summer family trail during the Peace Doves exhibition.
- Coordination of a social justice programme that culminated in student-curated exhibition at the Cathedral.

## Overview

Across 2025 we continued to offer free places for Southwark Borough schools with high levels of students eligible for pupil premium through a bursary scheme generously funded by the St Olave's Foundation Trust.

On top of delivering the general visit programme, the Learning Centre continued its partnership work with the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education supporting teacher training events across the year and delivering the very popular 'Journey to the Manger' in December. This brought together seven classes of year 2 students from across our diocesan school family to enjoy a festive day of storytelling, craft, music and worship

helping uncover the meaning behind the Christmas story.

A highlight for the team this year has been coordinating the Cathedral's part in the Church of England's Triangle of Unity social justice programme. This national programme aims to engage students and staff with current social justice issues, serving 30 schools across the UK. The Southwark Cathedral programme was the first of 15 programmes to launch with 14 other Cathedrals taking part over the next three years. Our project culminated in a beautiful and powerful exhibition of student-curated work at the Cathedral in January 2026 as well as a family festival celebrating cultural heritage from West Africa and the Caribbean with storytelling, drumming workshops and craft.



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## Operations and funding

The Learning Centre is staffed by a part-time manager supported by a part-time administrator and a dedicated, talented team of 11 teaching volunteers. Funding is largely generated through school visit income with support from individual donations. We are incredibly grateful for the continued support of our generous donors who help enable this work for children and young people.

### Snap-shot teacher feedback

- Very well organised. Clearly had knowledge of specification and could capably challenge our students understanding. Very interactive and engaging for all young people.
- Whilst showing the importance of Christianity, you modelled positive thinking about other religions through your words and the content of the workshops. The tour was enriched by the role-play/dress up sessions which the children loved. The content was pitched perfectly. The art session was also perfect, they were so proud of what they'd made.
- I liked the fact that the whole visit was very well organised and it was clear that the children's safety was a top priority. The two members of staff who led the separate tours around the cathedral were brilliant. The several role-play activities were a great way to engage the children.
- They were able to explore light as linked to our school motto 'Let your light shine' and enjoyed making the candles. They were able to look at the architecture in the cathedral linked to our art learning. The session on creation also supported their collective workshop learning and further prepared them for upcoming curriculum work.



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# Junior and Youth Xpress

Michael Rawson, Sub Dean

*We have seen a continued growth in young people attending our weekly Junior Xpress and monthly Youth Xpress sessions.*

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We have also recruited new leaders and are very grateful to them for their commitment and passion for our ministry among young people and families. Alongside their Sunday worship and activities, JX have also been planting bulbs and vegetables in Humphrey's Yard as part of our Eco Church programme, as well as counting birds in their neighbourhoods.

Once again, our young people took part in the annual Robes SleepOut in November, raising an amazing £7,875!

We look forward in the coming year to looking at ways of extending our offer to encourage young people in their discipleship and taking their part in the Cathedral family.

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# Connected (20s and 30s)

Jack Fleming

*The Cathedral's Young Adults' Group, Connected, relaunched in October under the guidance of Succentor Shannon Preston.*

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The group aims to meet monthly and so far has enjoyed social gatherings, and discussions on topics including Saints and Heroes of the Faith, Angels, Forgiveness and Justice and the Conversion of Paul. Plans are afoot to continue meeting while Shannon is on maternity leave.

If you're keen to join us, contact Jack Fleming [j.f.e.fleming@gmail.com](mailto:j.f.e.fleming@gmail.com).



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# Pastoral Services

Michael Rawson, Sub Dean

*The following pastoral offices were celebrated during the past twelve months:*

- Funerals 8
- Weddings 6
- Baptisms 10
- Confirmations 5
- Admission to Communion (postponed to March 2026) 12

The Electoral Roll is compiled in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. In 2025, the Electoral Roll was fully revised, resulting in a total membership at 362 at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in May 2025.



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# Mother's Union

Jill Tilly, Mother's Union Secretary

*The Southwark Cathedral with St Hugh's Branch of the Mothers' Union is part of a worldwide movement.*

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The movement is dedicated to supporting family life in all its diversity, strengthening communities, advocating for change, and working towards a future where everyone can flourish. The branch continues to play an active and valued role in the life of the Cathedral and the wider Diocese.

## **Prayer and Worship**

Midday Prayers, led by Mothers' Union branches from across the Diocese of Southwark, take place on the fourth Wednesday of each month (with the exception of December) in the Harvard Chapel from 11.45am to 12.15pm. These services offer a regular rhythm of prayer and are open to all worshippers.

The Cathedral with St Hugh's Branch led Midday Prayers on Wednesday 25th June. In addition, the Diocese participated in the Southwark Wave of Prayer from 31st August to 2nd September. Our branch led the prayers on 2nd September in the Harvard Chapel, focusing on prayer for the Diocese in the UK and across the world.

The Annual Diocesan Festival Service was held at Southwark Cathedral on Saturday 21st June. This joyful occasion included the commissioning of Comfort Idowu-Fearon as Canterbury Provincial President of the Mothers' Union, and the Revd Canon Roxanne Eversley as her Chaplain. The service was officiated by the Rt Revd Rosemarie Mallet, Bishop of Croydon.

During the service, Canon Roxanne was also formally admitted as a member of the Cathedral Branch of the Mothers' Union.

A Lent Quiet Day for Mothers' Union members was held at the Cathedral on Tuesday 24th February 2026. Led by the Dean, the day was well attended by members from across the Diocese and provided a valued opportunity for prayer, reflection, and fellowship.

## **Supporting Communities**

Branch members continue to support the Cathedral's tea@2 sessions and remain committed to knitting garments for babies in the Neonatal Unit at Evelina Children's Hospital.

Funds raised at our cake sale enabled one member to organise the twinning of six female and two male toilets with Southwark Cathedral. These are located in Uganda, Malawi, South Sudan, Zambia, Nepal, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania, offering practical support to communities overseas.

Members raised £385.00 (including Gift Aid) to sponsor Junior Express at the Robes Sleepout on Friday 21st November in support of the Robes Project.

On 27th March 2026, the Worldwide President of the Mothers' Union, Kathleen Snow, began a 10km run from the Cathedral. She was warmly welcomed at the finish by the Revd Canon Roxanne Eversley, who offered refreshments and fellowship, marking a memorable and encouraging occasion for all involved.

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# Streaming and Online Congregation

Tony Piper

*In 2025 the Streaming Team broadcast 83 services (2024: 78).*

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Alongside the regular Sunday 11am Eucharist and monthly Compline and Benediction, we covered a fuller calendar than ever, including seven Holy Week services, Candlemas, the Vision Meeting, the Ordination of Deacons, the Advent Procession, the Quiet Christmas Service, the Cathedral Carol Service, a Eucharist for Black History Month, and the Installation of the Director of Music. With the Vergers continuing to stream Morning Prayer daily, our combined output reached 448 services and events (2024: 443) and 296 hours of content (2024: 246).

Morning Prayer streams to both Facebook and YouTube; everything else goes to YouTube only. On a typical weekday around 25 people watch Morning Prayer live on YouTube; the live audience on Facebook is larger, though Facebook no longer reports concurrent viewer numbers so we can't be precise. The Facebook chat has become a small community in its own right — a recent weekday broadcast drew 35 comments, many simply "Good morning" to one another. The 11am Sunday Eucharist draws an online audience peaking around 65–70 viewers, averaging 50–55 throughout the service, with many more catching up later in the week. Many viewers have long-standing ties to the Cathedral but cannot attend in person because of ill health or relocation, and our streaming ministry continues to offer them a real sense of belonging.

The Ordination of Deacons in June drew our biggest live audience of the year, peaking at 119 simultaneous viewers. The Carol Service, Advent Procession and Christmas Day Eucharist each peaked between 70 and 90. The Dean's sermon "God, I thank you that I am not like other people" (October) reached well beyond our usual congregation: published separately, it drew 23,700 views on YouTube — about a fifth of our 2025 total — and brought 156 new subscribers.

## **YouTube highlights for 2025**

Total views rose to 116,200 (+33% on 2024) and watch time to 19,800 hours (+36%). We gained 633 new subscribers — 56% more than the 2024 intake — taking the total to 3,240 by 31 December. The audience remains predominantly UK-based (64.9%, up from 63.4%), with the USA next at 10.4%. The share aged 55+ fell from 98.8% to 91.4% — a sign we are reaching a slightly broader age range; the gender split was almost even at 51.2% female and 48.8% male. Mobile phones are now our most-used device at 37.2% of viewing, ahead of TVs (25.2%), computers (24%) and tablets (13.5%).

## **Team and technical**

In 2025 the core team — Tony, Maggie, Guy, Lynne, John and later Matthew — gave more than 420 volunteer hours. Two new cameras are improving what we can offer and should reduce the volunteer effort needed for each service. We always welcome feedback and enjoy hearing how the streams have helped you and others.

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# The Friends of Southwark Cathedral

Kate Dean, Director

*The Friends had another busy year in 2025. There were numerous opportunities for members to meet together with illustrated lectures, social gatherings and special services and our continuing programme of pilgrimages.*

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During 2025 we continued our journey from Rochester to Winchester. We will complete this walk early in 2026 and then begin a new pilgrimage together.

Our social programme expanded with a selection of new events. In June we hosted our first wine tasting evening, an entertaining way to spend a Friday night at the Cathedral. In the autumn we held our first Ceilidh. This was well supported by a wide audience and it was a delight to see the Cathedral being enjoyed by such a varied group of people. In November we ran our first wreath making workshop, again well attended and with some beautiful wreaths created. To end the year the Dean spent an evening in conversation with Michelle Lovric exploring his choice of discs when marooned on a desert island.

In March the Trustees held a development day to consider their 5 year strategy. It was decided to create three working groups to look in closer detail at the various areas the Friends needed to enhance: operations and membership; compliance and finance; strategy and marketing. Trustees will take a role on one of the 3 working parties which in turn will report to the full board.

At the Annual General Meeting in July Clare Johnson resigned her position as chair of the Friends after 7 years in the role. During her time she had led the Friends to develop their online presence and membership had increased. Clare had inspired some changes in the events programme and been a friendly presence at many Friends events. We also said goodbye to Guy Rowston and Margaret den Brinker after many years of service as Trustees. Three new Friends were co-opted onto the board for a year. At their first meeting after the AGM the Trustees elected Tessa Bartley to the position of chair.





The Trustees met four times during the year and were pleased to receive a range of requests for funding from the Cathedral. In the financial year the Friends funded the Easter and Christmas flowers as well as the Easter eggs for the congregation. They continued with their regular commitment paying for the ongoing costs of the volunteer management system and donations database. Bigger projects funded by the Friends Foundation Fund included meeting the cost of new signage around the Cathedral. A total of nearly £55,000 was given in grants to the Cathedral during the year.

All events were open to everyone, ensuring continued public benefit of the organisation. It has been valuable to have the opportunity to illustrate the work of the Friends throughout the Cathedral. In doing so we have been able to invite visitors to join the Friends thereby giving an ongoing commitment to the Cathedral.



# Unity Group

Frances Hiller, Chair

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The Cathedral Unity Group, which is an informally constituted group responsible to and reporting to Chapter under the auspices of the Sub-Dean, is responsible for ecumenical outreach. It organises and encourages participation in ecumenical activities locally, nationally and internationally. The Group has met formally on five occasions during the past year.

## Local ecumenical activity

### Unity Forum

This group brings together members of Southwark Cathedral, St George's Cathedral and St Olav's Norwegian Church. In September the Cathedral hosted a concert by a Norwegian choir, arranged by the Revd Svein Arne, interim priest at St Olav's. Members of the Unity Group attended Svein Arne's 70th birthday party, which also included a tour of the new development. The new priest, the Revd Geir Øy, started in September. I attended the installation at St Olav's, and took greetings from the Unity Group. Fr Michael and I subsequently met informally with Pastor Gier.

Relationships with St George's Cathedral remain good, and it was a blessing to have Fr Michael Branch accompany us to Rouen. An evensong, at which Dean Mark preached, marked the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on 25 January at St George's Cathedral, at which the combined choirs sang.

### Robes Project

Reports are received at each meeting from the Chair of the Trustees, Andrew McCall. Members of the Unity Group took part in the annual SleepOut, and Southwark Cathedral provided volunteers for the Night Shelter at Christ Church, Blackfriars. The problem of homelessness continues to grow, exacerbated by the economic situation.

### Cross of Nails

Southwark Cathedral has been a member of the ecumenical Community of the Cross of Nails since 2020, and sees responding to injustice through prayer and action as central to its mission. In this context the Cathedral is currently working in partnership with a number of organisations focussing on reconciliation in line with our Vision. The CCN Litany of Reconciliation is prayed in the Cathedral every Friday at Morning Prayer and at noon. Bergen Cathedral is also a member of CCN.

### Southbank Churches

Canon Michael Rawson has continued to represent us at meetings of this group, which includes representatives of local churches. Various events have taken place, including the Ecumenical Good Friday Walk of Witness, finishing with a short service at Waterloo Station, and a pilgrimage focussing on the River Thames, both attended by members of Southwark Cathedral.



## International Ecumenical Activity

### Rouen and Bergen

Individual personal friendships have helped to maintain the relationships with our link Cathedrals in Bergen and Rouen throughout the past year.

We visited Rouen in October, experiencing again the warm hospitality of our friends in Rouen. We continue to participate together regularly in online Lectio Divina sessions, as well as meeting online to share news. There is a very active WhatsApp group.

We received an excellent visit from the Bergen Unity Group in May 2025, and our return visit will take place in May. Bergen Cathedral's Choir sang at the 1100 eucharist on 7 September.

Finally, the Unity Group has gained several new members in the past year, but would welcome more! As Archbishop Sarah says about ecumenism: "Often, this work unfolds quietly – in prayer, in friendship, in hospitality, in shared witness. Yet these small and faithful acts are seeds of a greater harvest, signs of the deeper unity we already share in Christ."



# Society of Change Ringers

Bethan Hensman

The Southwark Cathedral Society of Change Ringers ring before Sunday service each week as well as sometimes quarter peal attempts following Sunday morning services and evensong. In total there have been 20 successful quarter peals following the service including - but not limited to - The Patronal Festival, the Installation of Simon Gutwein as the Dean's Verger, 80th Anniversary of VE Day and, Mothering Sunday. In addition we also practice on a Wednesday evening, regularly attracting over 30 ringers to each practice. These sessions are a key part of the society's calendar, offering a consistent and supportive environment for ringers of all abilities to develop.

Beyond the Cathedral, the Society remains highly active. The annual ringing tour in 2025 took place on the island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel.

Owned by the Landmark Trust, Lundy is home to a ring of ten bells. Despite challenging weather conditions, the trip was thoroughly enjoyed, with an impressive two peals and thirteen quarter peals rung during the week.

The Society has also represented itself in competitive ringing. In March 2025, Southwark competed in the National 12-Bell Striking Contest qualifiers in Rotherham, achieving a strong 4th place. Later in October 2025, Southwark entered two bands into the London 12-Bell Striking Contest, held at St Martin-in-the-Fields, ringing Erin Cinques.

The bands placed 8th and 9th respectively, with many participants taking part in their first striking competition.



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# St Hugh's Church

Bukky Omisakin and Clive Greenwood

*St Hugh's is the 'Parish Church' for the Conventional District which covers a small area in the South West corner of the Cathedral Parish.*

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The St Hugh's 'Parish' is ethnically very diverse, with a large number of second and third generation people of West African origin. The area is therefore largely Christian in faith. This diversity is reflected in the congregation. There were 51 names on the electoral roll at St Hugh's last APCM (2025).

## **Worship at St Hugh's**

Our Minister in Charge, Father Thomas, left us for a new role in February 2025. Mother Delorine Green was welcomed as interim Minister-in-Charge in March 2025 who herself moved on at Christmas to take up a permanent post as Vicar of St Augustine's, Grove Park. We reflect with great fondness and deep gratitude for the wonderful contributions both Thomas and Delorine made to life at St Hugh's. We are currently in the process of working with the Dean, as Rector of St Hugh's, on planning the next exciting stage in the ministry and mission at St Hugh's. In the meantime we are so grateful to Father Alun Ford who continues to preside once a month, and members of the Cathedral team and other local clergy, who share the load of leading worship at St Hugh's on other Sunday mornings. We enjoy welcoming them all!

In addition to our weekly Sunday morning Parish Mass, special services are also held

on main Feast days around Christmas and Holy Week. St Hugh's is licensed for marriages. We also engage with the local community where we can, for example distributing Easter Eggs to patients at Guy's Hospital.

A typical Parish Mass (9.30am every Sunday) will typically see around 35 worshippers, with sometimes up to a third being under the age of sixteen. Our Thursday evening Bible Study Group (7.30pm), established in 2024 is now well established. It is open to all.

## **Finance and Operations**

After recording a surplus in 2024 the latest, 2025, annual accounts show St Hugh's had a small deficit over the last year, largely a result of a delay receiving Gift Aid reimbursement. This has now been received. Use of our popular community space, the Rainbow Room, continues to flourish and the generosity of our congregation is vital to us. Finally, we were sad that our excellent Operations Manager, Alan Palmer, resigned for personal and family reasons late in the Autumn. We are pleased that he remains in touch and are now working on finding new cleaners and Alan's successor.

St Hugh's is deeply grateful for all the ministerial and vital operational support it receives from the Cathedral, particularly at the moment from Tom Bridges who has generously offered to coordinate our clergy rota. While valuing the close connection and vital support of the Cathedral, St Hugh's retains its own distinctive character, energy and context.

# The Cathedral School

Filiz Scott, Headteacher

In March we were pleased to welcome a SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspector to the school. It was a privilege to share our school with him and an opportunity to reflect on how our vision of “Life in all its fullness” is lived out each day.

The inspection recognised that the school “is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.” We were particularly encouraged that our Christian vision is “consistently and confidently lived out across the school.” Children themselves described the school as “magical,” which captures the joy and sense of belonging we see daily.

The report highlights the strength of relationships, noting that pupils and adults are “valued, seen and heard.” This reflects the work of a dedicated staff team, who place children at the heart of every decision. Their care, professionalism and shared sense of purpose are central to all that we do.

Collective worship remains a cornerstone of school life. The inspector noted that “warm, inclusive and high-quality daily collective worship enriches school life” and “clearly nourishes the spiritual growth of the community.” We are grateful to the Cathedral clergy, who take turns to lead worship each week; something the children enjoy. The inspector also recognised how “pupils in Key Stage 2 are sorted into houses named after four of the values, in a powerful and affirming ceremony,” and our house system continues to provide a strong sense of identity and belonging.

We are grateful for the continued support of our parent community. From supporting reading and homework, to helping children learn lines for performances, and through donations towards our new library, this partnership makes a significant difference. It was a highlight to open our new library in December, with author Piers Torday joining us to mark the occasion and inspire our children as readers.

We appreciate the ongoing support of the Cathedral, which enriches school life through worship, guidance and a strong sense of community. At the beginning of April we were honoured to host Bishop Osiwald from Masvingo, who thanked the children for their regular prayers through our Prayer for Zimbabwe. The children enjoyed asking him questions, particularly about the food and the weather! The children were amazed to learn that some children their age walk up to four miles to school each day.

I was grateful for the opportunity to speak at the Chapter Meeting last term and to share both successes and current challenges. We appreciate the Chapter’s support and the prayers offered each week on our behalf. I would also like to thank Father Michael for his ongoing support as a governor and valued member of our school community. We remain committed to helping all flourish and live life in all its fullness, and we are thankful for our partnership with the Cathedral community.

# St Olave's Grammar School

Andrew Rees, Headteacher

Over the past year, St Olave's Grammar School has continued to combine academic distinction with a deeply rooted commitment to service, justice, and compassionate action, reflecting in practice the Church of England's emphasis on courageous advocacy and human flourishing.

The School understands education not only as the pursuit of excellence, but as the formation of values, conscience, and responsibility for the common good. The School was pleased to welcome the Dean of Southwark in February. The visit provided a valuable opportunity for pupils and staff to reflect on the shared commitment between the School and the Cathedral.

Academic outcomes remain exceptional. St Olave's was ranked third nationally in the Sunday Times Parent Power academic tables for state schools, confirming its position among the highest-performing schools in the country. Thirty-two pupils secured offers from Oxford and Cambridge across a wide range of disciplines, and demand for school places continues to grow, with record numbers applying for entry into Year 7.

Alongside academic success, the moral and culture of the School has received national recognition. St Olave's was named the safest state school in England, with unanimous parental confidence in pupil safety. This reflects a community shaped by dignity, self-discipline, and care, where pupils are expected to take responsibility for their conduct and for the wellbeing of others.

Service and social action are intentionally embedded within school life. Large-scale charitable fundraising remains a defining feature, with Festival and Cabaret events bringing together pupils and staff together, enabling pupils to experience generosity, teamwork, and advocacy as a whole-school community.

A particular strength is the emphasis on sustained service alongside reflection. Sixth Form students have completed their second year of volunteering with the Bromley Homeless Winter Shelter, supported by training that deepens understanding of homelessness and wider social inequalities. This programme promotes empathy, civic awareness, and responsible engagement with complex social issues.

Student leadership also continues to flourish. Through the pupil-founded organisation Youth United for Good, students have mobilised substantial charitable and social justice initiatives in partnership with civic organisations, equipping pupils to engage critically and responsibly with local and global need, and to exercise leadership rooted in service.

The Annual Interfaith Iftar, now in its fourth year and centred this year on the theme of empathy, brings together people of different faiths and backgrounds, offering a practical model of reconciliation and courageous engagement.

Together, these strands reflect a flourishing school community in which academic excellence is held alongside principled action, thoughtful leadership, and a clear commitment to advocating courageously for the common good.

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# Robes

Neil Tryner

*The Cathedral has a long-standing partnership with Robes, a separate charity providing advice and support to homeless people in Southwark.*

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During the coldest months of the year a different church communities host a night to accommodate homeless guests; providing hospitality and welcome and our team of volunteers are able to practically help people in our community and many volunteers see this as a key application of our gospel faith.

Every Friday evening a group of volunteers set up beds for 20 guests, welcome them to our sister church venue and partner Christ Church, Blackfriars, provide clothing and toiletries, hot showers, and take and wash guests' laundry as well as cooking and eating a meal together before guests and volunteers sleep for the night.

On the Saturday we set guests up for the day ahead with breakfast, before many go to work and also any support they may need before leaving us.

This year over 50 Cathedral volunteers have taken part in supporting the night shelter and we have been part of the family of churches and Robes team who provide a safe place for people to stay, giving them time to focus on the next part of their journey and contribute to over 100 homeless people moving into permanent homes.



# Stay in Touch

*Thank you for reading this report. We hope the information you have read has helped you find out more about our life and work. Please do keep in touch with us using the following channels.*

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## Website

[www.southwarkcathedral.org.uk](http://www.southwarkcathedral.org.uk)

## Social Media

For the latest news and events, follow us on social media.



Southwark Cathedral



southwark\_cathedral

## Newsletter

We send out a weekly round up of What's On at the Cathedral, including the latest news from our Cathedral community.

You can sign up on our website.

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