



# THE WARM WELCOME PROJECT

## 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR REVIEW, 2025



# *An introduction from the Rector*

On September 30th 2024 we at St Clement's launched 'The Warm Welcome Project', a uniting vision of how we would build up our Church as a community that prays, a community that is actively engaged in the mission of God, and a community gathering in an ancient building secured for future generations.

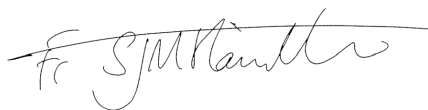
The last year has been one with much activity, much planning, much joy, much pain, much loss, and yet, above all, a year of much hope. Our Sunday worship remains our primary activity – coming together as all that we are, offering it to God, and allowing him to transform us. Our attendance continues to grow – welcoming those who have moved to Sandwich, those who have discovered St Clement's, and those who are more regularly taking their place in the pews here.

The life of St Clement's is alive in so many ways. With joyful weddings and baptisms, the dignity of funerals, civic events, our beautiful churchyard, regular welcomers in church, the glorious sound of our Choir and our bells, flowers, Coffee Pot, and so much more the life of St Clement's is always moving – but hopefully at a pace which nevertheless allows for stillness and peace.

The bulk of our Parochial Church Council meetings are structured with discussion on fabric, then updates and discussion across our six Warm Welcome Project areas of mission, before turning to safeguarding, the Hall, finance, and other matters. A year on from launching the Warm Welcome Project this brief booklet is designed to bring the whole congregation up to date on where we are with those areas of fabric and mission, and encourage continued prayer and engagement with what we hope to achieve over the next year, and on to 2030 and beyond.

Please continue to pray for St Clement's, for me as Rector, and for the Warm Welcome Project. Prayer cards continue to be available to assist with this.

Thank you for playing your part in keeping the flame of the Gospel burning in Sandwich,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Fr SJM Hamilton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fr Sebastian J. M. Hamilton  
Rector

### ***Photo Credits:***

**Front cover, from top right:** The Rector (SJM), Kerri Collins (<https://www.kcphotographyanddesign.co.uk/>), Diana James, Kerri Collins, Sandwich Infant School, Dominika Miechowska ([www.dominikamiechowska.co.uk/](http://www.dominikamiechowska.co.uk/)), Darryn Jenner, SJMH, SJMH, Ryan Allen, Diana James, Kerri Collins **Page 2** Ian Jones Photography **All others** SJMH, except p9 Sandwich Infant School, used with permission



# FABRIC

## HEATING

The very title of ‘The Warm Welcome Project’ stems from the biggest challenge we faced in 2024 – replacing our defunct boiler. Many churches are currently without heating, some for years at a time due to increased regulations and costs, and I pay tribute to all those who helped us to defy the odds and restore heat to the building in time for last winter.

The PCC has made the strategic decision to keep the building heated to a constant temperature in the winter, raising to a comfortable level this for services (Sundays, funerals, etc.). This helped to reduce our humidity levels from 98% to a mid 60% last winter, which safeguards much of our fabric from continued deterioration – especially our wonderful, wooden organ. It also makes St Clement’s far more welcoming for visitors over those months. This comes with an increased immediate cost, but provides potentially substantial long-term savings in reducing the damage that damp causes our building. We will monitor things closely this winter and assess whether we can hopefully continue this going forward.

## FLAGPOLE

Our flagpole blew down in a storm early in 2024, and though the insurers will cover much of the cost complications with wooden beams and red tape continue to keep the pace slow – but I am very grateful to those who continue to push this project forward with enthusiasm, especially Steeple Keepers Martin Thorley and Bruce Williams.

## MISERICORD

After some years of waiting for the right person and the right paperwork I’m delighted to say that we have



identified a craftsman suitable to repair our medieval misericord, the unusual folding seat in one of the medieval choir stalls. This work will be carried out soon.

## FLOORS AND CEILINGS

**Very excitingly** the PCC has appointed a world-leading firm (after a careful and complex tendering process) who are repairing and cleaning all our floors and tiles. They have experience with some of the most important tiles in the country, including in the Palace of Westminster, so we can trust them with the necessary repairs to medieval flooring damaged by damp trapped beneath carpets, with restoring our Victorian tiles, and with carefully cleaning our treasured medieval tiles. They will also explore restoring the Victorian tiled wall behind the High Altar, whitewashed and hidden a century ago.

Thank you to those who have suggested decorators for the ceilings of the ‘modern rooms’, this work will also be progressed in due course.

## VESTRY ROOF

**During two recent storms** water gushed into the Vestry, revealing that some of the roof and guttering had been worn away over time. A temporary repair has been carried out, and we are now looking at a more permanent solution to secure this part of the building.

## GENTLE REORDERING

**The glorious tower of St Clement’s** is one of our most important features, but the presence of the great columns within the building can make sight-lines difficult from pews to altars. The Victorians reordered the pews for the purpose of Sung Mattins (a far less ‘visual’ service than our present-day Parish Eucharist), and our Choir stalls were added in the crossing in the early 1950s. The acoustic here is challenging (hence the Choir singing from St George’s Chapel during Holy Communion).

Perhaps most pertinently, our building is open to visitors daily. Though many come for beauty and history, we aim to provide a peace that speaks of the presence of God. Our building, ideally, should 'echo' our Sunday worship for the next six days so that visitors have a sense of who we are, and why and how we pray. The recent test of moving the front pew on the north side has received very positive feedback, and opened up our worship. There are potentially some very exciting similar opportunities open to us, and ways of 'testing' these to see whether we like the feeling and whether it helps our building to glorify God – a living, beautiful Church for our parish.

All of this is leading the PCC, in consultation with leading Church artists at the Chichester Liturgical Workshop, to consider some very exciting options for gentle reordering which might support our worship, and help us to share the Good News with our visitors. Nothing will happen without full consultation with the congregation, which will begin in due course and give full opportunities for feedback and discerning together whether this is something which we wish to pursue.

### WORK FROM THE 2024 QUINQUENNIAL

Our Quinquennial Report last year (carried out every five years by the Inspecting Architect) identified a wide range of small work to be undertaken, including repointing, reroofing in places, and the need to investigate and repair some of the walls where plaster is discoloured and crumbling away due to the damp. We are in the process of preparing a Scope of Work for this, and should have a sense of what the work will really entail in due course. The great hope is that, by our 2029 Quinquennial Report, our building will largely have a clean bill of health.

### THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

The Garden near the North Porch is now closed to interments, since no space remains, but it is still a site





of great importance to many. Unfortunately it is very difficult to maintain due to heavy footfall on the grass, and the surrounding hedgerows casting shadows and trapping fallen leaves.

The new Garden of Remembrance has been begun in the Churchyard Extension, along the fence line of the Rectory.

A public consultation will be run regarding both these areas, with the aim of establishing them both as worthy sites of memorial to those who we now commend to the heavenly court.

## + HOW TO PARTICIPATE +

**Maintaining a medieval, Grade I listed building is a great undertaking.** We are lucky to work with an exceptional Inspecting Architect, but the workload is still heavy both on myself as Rector, and on the Churchwardens. If you might be interested in getting involved, perhaps meeting with contractors, or being the point of contact for the architect on certain individual projects, we would be delighted to hear from you. It is a great privilege to care for, and get to know, our beautiful building, and those with experience of project management, building maintenance, or simply interested in history could find this work fascinating.

Our restricted fabric fund is relatively healthy, thanks to an exceptional bequest limited to this area, which allows us to proceed with some of the work above without running large fundraising campaigns. This allows the PCC to keep our focus on increasing the income to our general account, which continues to operate at a worrying deficit. However if you would particularly like to contribute to any of the above work either I or Steve, our Treasurer, would of course be delighted to speak about this further.



Please pray  
daily for God's  
guidance over  
the Warm  
Welcome Project

Ask what your  
own role might  
be, and use this  
calendar to pray  
each day for one  
of our six  
focusses of  
mission.

# 2024

Each day pray for...

***Sunday***

*Sandwich Parish*

***Monday***

*Children & Young People*

***Tuesday***

*Teaching & Praying*

***Wednesday***

*Eco Church*

***Thursday***

*Tourism & Visitors*

***Friday***

*Pastoral Care*

***Saturday***

*Little Gardens of Sandwich*

# 2029







# *Children & Young People*

## **From the Rector:**

There are 587 people aged 19 or under living in Sandwich (the civil parish, out of 3,028 residents at the last census – therefore 20% of our neighbours), and across our schools nearly 4,000 are being educated in our parish daily.

Over the last year I have worked hard to build relationships across our town – as a Governor at Sir Roger Manwood's I have worked with the new Headteacher and Head of Philosophy and Ethics to reimagine some of the school's corporate worship, and we have held a good number of school visits. Our relationship with Sandwich Infant School continues to grow, and I'm now forming a closer relationship with Sandwich Technology School as well, with some exciting milestones to come in the new term.

I underwent the Diocesan 'Launchpad' training, which is aimed to help Incumbents with little children's ministry (but who pray with churches keen to develop it)

to develop a bespoke strategy for growing this ministry. Since then I have been engaging with groups and individuals to quietly develop some ideas of what we can do, and identify what funding might be available to help make this happen.

This is the key area of mission for us – St Clement's is in a unique position to link together organisations and individuals in our town to achieve something truly special and long-lasting.

## **How can I participate?**

You may have seen references in the media to 'The Quiet Revival' – evidence suggesting that young people (primarily in their twenties, but also teenagers) are returning to Christianity and Church. Even where young people are not directly attending worship, fewer and fewer identify as atheists and there is a great openness to exploring spiritual answers to common human questions. There is little doubt that growth is happening, both from statistical and anecdotal evidence, though this

is largely in cities, and in churches which emphasise the beauty of worship (either in a very 'charismatic' sense, or in traditional worship such as ours or higher).

There's a temptation to think that this, therefore, might not apply to us. This is not so. What it shows us is that for the sake of serving the young people of our nation, and for the sake of keeping Christianity alive, we must have faith in our faith. Young people are seeking something more to life, something deeper, and are open to the Church providing those answers. Young people, of any age, are looking for integrity. This doesn't mean we need to have all the answers, or an unshakable faith – we should be ready to say 'I don't know', and even to acknowledge doubts, but to speak of our sense of God's love and our commitment to the light even though it shines in the darkness. Each and every one of us must take our faith seriously, praying and learning about God, so that we are ready to share it honestly when God provides opportunities, without being overbearing and without acting.

So what might St Clement's do? One fascinating finding from anecdotal and statistical evidence: many young people no longer seek companionship and community, because social media on mobile phones provides this for them. This is one reason why

traditional youth groups, Sunday Schools, etc. struggle in many areas. Instead any groups or events should provide something that young people cannot experience via social media.

The PCC have agreed to explore what a project for children and young people revolving around music/the arts could look like in our parish. At this stage the Rector is continuing to meet with interested parties and to develop the ideas – including meeting with local children through the schools in relaxed conversations, listening to what they think and say.

This project has the potential to include many expressions of the arts, but especially the choral tradition, something which has the capacity to engage the imagination of young people (once they discover it) and would naturally grow from our existing tradition.

Funding would be necessary, and almost certainly employing someone to oversee this work, but this is not impossible and the Rector is also in conversations with several potential funding partners. He would be delighted to hear of any ideas for groups/individuals who might be interested in supporting this work.

If you'd like to hear more, and potentially to throw some more ideas around and discuss what this could look like, please add your name on the sign up sheet released today.

# Teaching & Praying

The Lent Group provided a relaxed but powerful opportunity for people to get together and discuss the scriptures without pressure to understand everything or be 'super holy'. We have explored how this could take place on a more regular basis, along with the idea of inviting interesting speakers to Sandwich for semi-regular lectures and discussions. We have also been bold in trying out new forms of prayer, such as the well-supported Zoom Compline.

## **How can I participate?**

Keep an eye out for more dates

as they emerge, and if the idea of helping to arrange informal lectures, talks, or discussions appeals to you please do speak with the Rector or the Churchwardens.

Guides for suggested reading, and how to pray privately, are also in development.

We all have a role to play in our worship, simply by attending and praying together, but it would also be good to explore having more people on rotas for reading, intercessions, etc... Please see the separate sign-up sheet launched today.

# Eco Church

Much work was undertaken investigating eco-friendly alternatives to gas, as we sought to bring heat back to our building. Regrettably no technology was yet ready, a judgement ratified by the highest bodies in Church House. Our hope is that, by the time that this boiler eventually reaches the end of its life perhaps during the late 2030s, we will have identified and engaged with new technologies.

In due course we may be able to explore the 'Eco Church' awards, and find new ways to encourage our local wildlife and fauna – work already

admirably undertaken as part of the Churchyard Rediscovered.

## **How can I participate?**

If you'd be interested in being involved in this area do please speak with me or the Churchwardens and we can discuss some of the resources available for eco audits etc., which would be the first step towards Eco Church accreditation.

Barry Brooks is always pleased to talk with those who might like to be involved in the Churchyard Rediscovered.





# *Tourism & Visitors*

2026 marks 800 years since the first Mayor of Sandwich, and this first election took place within St Clement's.

To mark this anniversary we are looking again at the literature we have available to tell our church's story:

- We have now run out of the second edition of colour guidebooks, published in 2012. Work is underway on a fully revised and updated third edition, to launch next year marking 800 years since the first Mayor of Sandwich

- A new Quick Guide is being developed, as is a new Children's Activity Book

- To compliment the above, and to bring us up to date with technology, visitors will be able to download an app on their phones to guide them around the Church and Churchyard, with a new audio guide being developed.

**How can I participate?**

2026 will be an exciting chance for us all to learn more of our own history. Those who have already read the wonderful Churchyard Guide will know, I am sure, how this transforms our experience of the space around us. First and foremost, take this opportunity to learn more of the history of St Clement's so that you can feel more united with, and more inspired by, the faith of those who have worshipped here before us.

Keep an eye out for the dates of recording audio for the guides – no acting experience necessary..!

We are looking for corporate or individual sponsorship of the above new guidebooks etc., which could cost up to £2,000 (though costs have been kept down by keeping graphics design work 'in house'). If you think any local businesses or groups might be able to help with this sponsorship please do speak with me or the Churchwardens, we'd be delighted to publicise their generosity during the launches etc..



## *Pastoral Care*

Pastoral care is the responsibility of all of us, keeping an eye out for one another and ensuring that no one is forgotten.

Our Reader, Derek Kirkaldie, has recently undertaken Anna Chaplaincy training, and will be commissioned as an Anna Chaplain in due course. This scheme is strong within our Diocese, and across the country, providing people with training in listening, safeguarding, attentiveness, and other skills essential to pastoral care.

A new Pastoral Care Group could ensure that those who are housebound/in care are visited and prayed with/for, and there is potential

for working with Upton House Nursing Home (who would value regular worship), and potentially connecting with some of the excellent Dementia care offered at Age Concern in Sandwich.

### **How can I participate?**

From 12:10pm on Sunday 7th December Derek Kirkaldie and the Rector will be talking about what a Pastoral Care Group could look like in our Benefice, for any who might be interested in hearing more. Those who wish, after this 'Come and See' session, can sign up for the training which will take place online during January 2026.



## *Little Gardens of Sandwich*

The Little Gardens of Sandwich made a very successful return this year, with extremely positive feedback and an extraordinary final total raised of £8,500.

The date for next year is Saturday 6th June, and we will be looking to open gardens around the Delf Street side of the town.

### **How can I participate?**

Watch out for more information next year, or if you might like to open your garden (or know of a neighbour or friend who might!), or help on the Committee, please speak to Rhys Llewellyn-Harries ([littlegardens@stclementsandwich.org.uk](mailto:littlegardens@stclementsandwich.org.uk))





## *Finances*

May I offer a personal, huge thank you to all those who have listened and responded to news of our finances over the last year. There is a great deal of financial generosity across our congregation, and in particular I'm so grateful to note that our regular giving has increased since the launch of the Warm Welcome Project.

At this stage we are still budgeting that our General Fund will end the year with a notable deficit of £40,000, and while we have capital funds to cover this shortfall we are unable to invest or use our capital wisely while we face continued deficits into the

future. Nevertheless, the future is not hopeless. We continue to monitor our expenditure and make reductions where possible, we seek new funding and grant avenues for our upcoming fabric and children's work, and to gently explore new revenue streams (such as our contactless reader, which has proven extremely successful in encouraging increased giving from visitors during the week).

We will continue to carefully but resolutely reflect on our responsibility to be good stewards – with our time, our talents, and our financial resources. In particular we will



continue to reflect on the importance of regular giving, ideally through the Parish Giving Scheme, which makes it much safer to budget and plan.

Tithing, the practice of giving 10% of one's income away, is a good starting point for consideration of one's giving.

### **How can I participate?**

Every donation, of every size, is of great help. Regular giving, especially through the Parish Giving Scheme, is particularly appreciated as it helps us to plan much more securely, and sign up forms are available online ([www.stclementsandwich.org.uk/donate](http://www.stclementsandwich.org.uk/donate)) or in church. Nevertheless the PCC appreciates that some are unable to give on a regular basis, and we are also very grateful for individual donations made.

There are lots of good ideas for fundraisers, and plenty of people who express a willingness to help run them on the day, but we do also need some individuals to take responsibility for overseeing such events, and again please do let us know if you might be interested in helping – perhaps with a one-off event first, as a way of learning together.

Steve Kirkpatrick has done a superb job as Honorary Treasurer in finding new ways to present our accounts to the PCC, which has been invaluable in making strategic decisions. He now wishes to step down as Treasurer

in 2026. By the time of the APCM we hope to have management of invoices, receipts, and reports run through the Parish Office, utilising some excellent software that has already been tested on the accounts of St Peter and St Paul Worth. The job of Treasurer will, therefore, hopefully be more manageable as we as a PCC appreciate the time constraints on volunteer's lives. If you might be interested to discuss what the role of Treasurer would involve (with no commitment at this stage) please do speak to me, a Churchwarden, or to Steve Kirkpatrick.

Alongside this, we have a connection with an excellent professional grant fundraising specialist, though it would be very helpful to have someone from St Clement's as point of contact with her, identifying grants and overseeing applications. If you might be interested in the role of Grant Co-ordinator, which should not be too burdensome and hopefully fit around other commitments well, please do let me, Steve, or the Churchwardens know.



### **The Warm Welcome Prayer**

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you called St Clement and the earliest Christians  
to be of one heart and one soul  
in the power of the Resurrection  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit:  
hallow our life together in the way of your love,  
and bless the work that we carry out in your name,  
that through the Warm Welcome Project  
we may build up your Church in Sandwich,  
and your Kingdom may come on earth;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**[www.stclementsandwich.org.uk](http://www.stclementsandwich.org.uk)**