St Mary's Ashendon – report 2026

Worship and services

We have maintained our service schedule as before with Lego church being held on the first Sunday of the month in the village hall, Peter Johnson's informal worship on the second Sunday and Holy Communion on the fourth Sunday.

The informal worship and Communion services have a steady attendance of regular worshippers. On an average day, excluding festivals etc, numbers for informal worship are approximately 10 attendees and Holy Communion the attendance is about thirteen.

These figures are greatly increased on special days.

Christmas Day Holy Communion we had 26 attending, Easter Day had 35 and love your Church saw 38 of us in Church. The Remembrance Day service led by Peter Johnson was well attended with 37 of us in Church and our lovely Carol and Christingle service was enjoyed by 46 of us.

Our Lego Church attendance blows hot and cold, depending on how many come from the wider benefice and beyond. Numbers can be low but with attendance jumping up to around 20 from time to time.

Church Building and Churchyard

The Church building is in generally good repair although with a building of this antiquity there are always cracks and other faults that need monitoring. The persistent leak above the pulpit seems to have been cured and other smaller leaks are not serious and only occur from time to time usually accompanied by very strong wind and heavy rain.

The one serious problem is our perimeter wall which is in danger of collapsing into the road on the corner close to the war memorial. I have spoken to a number of people who were either not suitable or not interested. However, John Curtis has said he will do the work for us, but as yet has not given a price or a date for the work to start. I shall be pressing him to have the work completed this summer.

On a more positive note, the new floor levelling the space at the back of the church looks great and works very well both as a space for worship and socialising, notably the cream teas and clothes swap. Peter has installed our new PA system which is again a great success. All the new equipment is hidden safely away under lock and key behind a new door in the choir stalls.

We held a churchyard working party in the Autumn which was a success with a lot of maintenance tasks completed. Many thanks to all those who helped and also the churchyard mowing volunteers.

Our helpers at St Mary's church

We are blessed with a willing community of volunteers who support us. Below are listed 63 people from 35 village households. This is amazing support, for which we would like to acknowledge and thank the following who have helped the church flourish during the year:

For Administrative duties: Kevin Nash as Treasurer, Peter Johnson as vice Chair, PCC Secretary and Gift Aid Secretary, Richard Bates as Churchwarden, Liz Johnson as Parish Safeguarding Officer, Suzie

Crwys-Williams for auditing the accounts and Imogen Holbrook plus Kevin Nash for circulating service details.

For acting as Trustees: Kevin Nash, Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Julian Chester, Imogen Holbrook, Peter Johnson, Thea Gemmell, Ross Gemmell, Belinda Watt.

For Ashendon Voices: Fiona Jacob, Helen Barlow, Vanessa Bates, Claire Burton, Imogen Holbrook, Mary Nash, Sue Paine, Jan Pike, Ruth Pimm, Shirley Rand, Felicity Smettem, Mel Vallance, Jean Watson, Belinda Watt.

For broadcasting the monthly communion service on Facebook: Peter Johnson

For Cleaning and Flowers: Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Claire Burton, Suzie Crwys-Williams, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Imogen Holbrook, Fiona Jacob, Liz Johnson, Richard Lewin, Sue Lewin, Margaret Lloyd, Sian Miller, Jan Pike, Ruth Pimm, Pam Rand, Shirley Rand, Felicity Smettem, Peter Smettem, Carol Smith, Gill Walker, Belinda Watt.

For organising the flower and church cleaning rotas: Felicity Smettem

For collecting the Bernwode News annual subscription and delivering the Bernwode News: Kevin and Mary Nash

For contributing church news to the Bernwode News: Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem

For organising the Church Bazaar: Pam and Shirley Rand

For helping with the church Bazaar: Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Margaret Lloyd, Jan Pike, Pam Rand, Shirley Rand, Felicity Smettem, Peter Smettem, Belinda Watt

For hosting the home group: Ross and Thea Gemmel

For installing the new PA system: Peter and James Johnson

For preparing for Holy Communion: Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem, Vanessa Bates, Belinda Watt

For leading prayers: Thea & Ross Gemmell, Imogen Holbrook, Peter Johnson, Susan Rand, Belinda Watt.

For leading the monthly Morning Worship: Peter Johnson

For reading in the services: Vanessa Bates, Julian Chester, David Crwys-Williams, Ross Gemmell, Thea Gemmell, Imogen Holbrook, Fiona Jacob, Hugh & Adelyne Gemmell, Felicity Smettem.

For moving the Organ into and out of the Church: Tom and James Johnson, Dan and Tom Collins (of Brill), Jessica Edwards, Martin Saunders.

For Playing the organ over Christmas: Tom Johnson

For Hedge Cutting and Ivy Clearance: Richard Bates, Peter Johnson and Peter Smettem

For organising the bottom Churchyard Mowing: Paul Horwood

For organising the front Churchyard Mowing: Richard Bates

For Mowing the Churchyard: Julian Chester, Paul de Lusignan, Ashley Holbrook, Paul Horwood, Andy Howes, Richard Lewin, Richard Phillips, Martin Saunders, Peter Smettem, Gill Walker.

For Weed Killing the Pathways: Chris Paine

For Opening and Locking the Church: Fay Bird, Imogen Holbrook, Ruth Pimm, Peter Johnson, Felicity Smettem, Peter Smettem, Belinda Watt.

For Organising and helping with the Harvest Supper: Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Julian Chester, Ruth Pimm, Harry Theobald, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Imogen Holbrook, Shirley Rand, Felicity Smettem, Peter Smettem, Matthew Gardner, Tans Theobald, Belinda Watt

For organising the Cream Teas and Clothing Swap in 2025: Belinda Watt, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem

For help with cream teas & Clothing Swap: Sue Rand, Sue Paine, Shirley Rand, Carol Smith, Archer Dymott, Wes Baker, Fred Holbrook, Peter Watt, Harry Theobald

For publicity design for cream teas and clothes swap: Sue Maldonado

For organising and providing refreshments at Lego Church: Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Thea Gemmell, Ross Gemmell , Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem, Peter Smettem, Belinda Watt

For organising Love Your Church 2025: Imogen Holbrook

For organising the pop-up pub: Richard and Vanessa Bates

For producing the Christingles: Thea and Ross Gemmel, Belinda Watt

For providing music at the services: Peter Johnson, Peter Smettem

For providing the Altar poppies at Remembrance: The WI

For providing the Angel Decorations at Christmas: Carol Smith and the WI.

For Refreshments after the Services: Sue Rand, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Peter Smettem, Felicity Smettem