



PARISH PROFILE

**Great Marlow with
Marlow Bottom,
Little Marlow and Bisham**

June 2025

An aerial photograph of a church and its surrounding cemetery. The church is a large, light-colored stone building with a prominent square tower and multiple gabled roofs. It is situated on a grassy area. In the foreground, there is a cemetery with numerous headstones of various shapes and sizes. To the left of the church, there is a body of water, possibly a river or lake. The background shows more trees and some residential buildings. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

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We are ordinary people led
by an extraordinary God,
whose love inspires us to
welcome everyone, serve our
communities and grow as we
follow Jesus together

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Welcome

from Guy Elsmore, Archdeacon of Buckingham

Reading Rep Theatre Company are currently putting on a reinterpretation of Jerome K. Jerome's much loved earlier work, 'Three Men in a Boat', which showcases the glorious location that All Saints Marlow inhabits.

It's not too much of a stretch to note that the next Rector of the 4U Team will similarly be required to reinterpret a much-loved earlier work.

With this vacancy created by the recent consecration of the new Bishop of Buckingham, the successful applicant will need to be sufficiently content in the shape and texture of their own vocation to serve this team in a new way, gladly and without inhibition.

The Team aspect of this vacancy is one that deserves to be underlined. Bisham and Little Marlow, Marlow Bottom and Marlow each occupy a particular niche within the wider Team – each have great heart for mission, honesty in worship and a lasting warmth of pastoral care. They are also, to further develop the riparian theme, buoyed by the Holy Spirit, which is a hallmark of the Team.

There are challenges that are yet to be met, wrinkles that need ironing and opportunities that have been missed or only dimly perceived. This profile bravely outlines examples of all of these and shows just how well resourced any successful applicant will be in rising to these challenges.

There is an excitement about what God might be about to do in and through this Team, and about who God might yet call to follow in the footsteps of His Son. There is an excitement, too, of the new tone that the appointee will strike as they reinterpret what has gone before for a new season, with a fresh cast of characters and an ever-changing set.

Serving in an exceptionally gifted clergy team, within a flourishing Deanery, this post will be well served by someone who can hear God's voice through those they serve, who can identify lack amid seeming abundance and treasures the call to be a Deacon first.

As ever, the new Priest will be committed to the Diocese vision of becoming a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's World - contemplative, compassionate and courageous - and to model and enable a flourishing ministry, for all, in line with the Diocese work in this area.

I commend this profile to you, and I welcome conversations about the role with interested candidates.



Introduction

Welcome to our Parish Profile. We are delighted that you are considering the role of Team Rector of the Marlow 4U Team. We hope this profile will help you find out more about us, our needs and what we have to offer. We are praying that the Holy Spirit will lead you as you explore this exciting opportunity.

The new Rector will join the 4U Team at a time of change, growth and new life across all our churches. The Rector's opportunity will be to keep us all in the wider parish going forward together, as well as leading locally in the main part of the role at All Saints Marlow (ASM). With a vibrant church in the centre of this thriving and desirable riverside town, it is an exciting time, pressing on in the current Vision, and seeing wonderful growth in Alpha, children's and youth activities in church and across schools, and community service.

We are looking for a Jesus-focussed, Spirit-led leader, preacher and pastor for this next season, full of energy and enthusiasm. We seek help to discern God's vision for us. We need to be led in further developing wider leadership training, equipping and releasing many to serve across our congregations. We desire insight and experience in embedding discipleship that goes on to reproduce in others, and in growing into 'new wineskins' fit for a larger team and churches to sustain the growth and new life that we are experiencing.

We are aware of the challenges facing the church in following Jesus and sharing his good news in today's social, cultural and economic contexts. We want to be deeply rooted in the Bible and prayer, to reach out with love and welcome and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Whilst identifying some hopes, needs, opportunities and challenges within the Profile, we welcome ideas to nurture, challenge and refresh. Our congregations are flourishing, supportive, keen to serve, welcoming and desiring to grow in God, reflected in the wide range of activities in the life of the wider parish that you will read about.

If you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to email us at caroline.bradley@4u-team.org and myrossbull@gmail.com

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will be inspired to apply.

Caroline Bradley-Sessions and Ross Bull

PCC Lay Representatives and All Saints Marlow Churchwardens

We have included throughout some quotes from our prayerful consultation and discernment with church congregations, team clergy and community partners on the characteristics and vision of 4U and ASM, together with hopes for what the Team Rector will bring.



Who will lead us?

The Role

In the 4U Clergy Team

- Someone who will look DOWN – looking after their roots and will be deeply rooted in Christ. They will drink in his Spirit and his Word. Their relationship with Jesus will be a priority and an encouragement to others
- Someone who will look OUT – into the World, seek to understand it and see it through the eyes of Christ, speaking prophetically to it and about it to the Church. Someone who will set an example in personal evangelism
- Someone who will look UP – of all the clergy in the Team, the Rector is the one who must look up from the church they are responsible for the most. They take a lead in encouraging us to remember the Team, plan ahead, see the big picture, and nurture relationships with the Diocese and the Deanery
- Someone who will look AROUND – caring for, loving, encouraging and challenging the Team, through taking appropriate time one to one, through encouraging all to take a lead whilst ensuring direction and common goals in the team. They will keep us working together while respecting our differences, pray for and support as we minister as a team

In the wider parish churches

- Listening, supporting, understanding of history and tradition
- Encouraging local teams and envisioning
- Engage in strategic local moments, such as the completion of the Marlow Bottom new building and the appointment of a Team Vicar at Bisham

In All Saints Marlow

- Preach and teach God's word with confidence to challenge and inspire
- Lead us into God's presence, welcoming the work of the Holy Spirit, encouraging the expression of spiritual gifts in the church and the community
- Lead a culture of pastoral care and safety for all in the church community
- Lead in discerning and implementing a vision for the strategic long-term growth and development of God's work
- Nurture and empower the leadership team to shape our vision and put into action, discerning and developing new vocations
- Care for, nurture and support the staff team as individuals and in their ministries

In the community and beyond

- Play a prominent part in the life of the town and parish, fostering good relationships with civic bodies, charities, community groups and schools
- Support the ecumenical collaboration with leaders of Churches Together in Marlow
- Build friendships with and contribute to Wycombe Deanery and Oxford Diocese
- Be the focal point for mission partnerships, including Compassion and New Wine.

This upfront summary describes the key priorities discerned for the role of Team Rector.

We are seeking a team leader of the Clergy Team, one who will envision and support the wider parish churches and one to be a strong builder in growing sustainable Christ-centred ministry and mission through ASM and beyond.

"someone who loves Jesus"

"willingness to get out and about in the community"

"Spirit filled"

"relevant...understanding culture, Marlow society, world affairs and youth"



Who will lead us?

The Person

Personal qualities

- Passionate about introducing others to Jesus
- Open to the work of the Spirit in their own life and in the life of the church, seeking prophetic and healing ministry
- Takes time to care spiritually for themselves and those close to them, with a sustaining prayer and Bible reading life and living by a regular pattern of spiritual refreshment
- Be a confident, engaging, supportive and approachable leader who demonstrates faith in action
- Be able to build strong working relationships and relate to a wide range of people
- Recognise and encourage gifts and skills in others
- Supportive of different styles of worship, from the formal to the more relaxed and informal

Experience

- Leading a workplace and/or a church and a staff team, delegating and growing leaders
- Moving in the power and gifts of the Spirit, whilst enabling others to grow and minister
- Managing staff and volunteer teams and working collaboratively with others
- Developed, communicated and implemented vision and strategy
- Involvement in community ministry and working with the disadvantaged
- Overseen training and implementation of pastoral care teams
- Training others in the workplace, or church including curates, other ministers and congregations
- Record of helping others grow in their ability and enthusiasm to preach the Word

Full support will be provided through retreats, conferences and study materials.

The parish we serve

The 4U Team

In 1993, ASM was joined together with the churches in Bisham, Little Marlow and Marlow Bottom to form a team of four churches (originally called the Marlow Area Team Ministry). Bisham and Little Marlow churches are in villages a mile or so outside Marlow town. These two churches each have their own village church school, with Marlow having two church schools. Marlow Bottom is a valley town on the outskirts of Marlow and is home to The Lantern, a church community relaunched ten years ago from the foundation of St Mary's church established 60 years ago.

Our four churches share clergy and leadership structures and work together to see God's kingdom grow. In 2014 the team was renamed the "4U Team", expressing 4 churches united in a desire to see God's kingdom come and that, whoever you are, the church is here for you.

Although there are four churches, there is one PCC called Team Council (TC), meeting bi-monthly. Each church also has its own Church Council (CC), meeting six to eight times per year. To date, the Rector has attended TC and the ASM CC, but not the other CC's. Each of the clergy visits the other churches in the team from time to time so that we benefit from the range of gifts in the team, but Team Vicars also have their 'home' church where they spend most of their time. The four churches share a small administrative hub, the parish office, set in the corner of the ASM site, where the part-time 4U Team Administrator is based.

The four churches provide a wide variety of worship in a typical month – from informal and interactive family services to innovative forms of contemporary worship, from said communion to full choral eucharist with robed choir.

The Clergy Team meets weekly. A common teaching programme is largely followed, planned by the team-wide Worship Planning Team. Weddings and funerals across the churches are taken by all clergy. As a Team, we also offer pastoral support to our community with strong links with local schools, hospitals and other groups in the wider area.

Website: <http://4u-team.org>

The **clergy team** comprises:-

Bisham: John Smith (retiring May 2025 - awaiting appointment of Team Rector before advertising for replacement) and Carol Cooper. Both are part time and self supported Team Vicars

Little Marlow: Fiona Ellingham 50% part-time Team Vicar

Marlow Bottom: Graham Watts, full time Team Vicar, and a new curate, Tom Venables, from July 2025

Marlow: Team Rector (vacancy) full time, and Sarah Jones, full time Team Vicar as a locally funded post (LFP), with support from retirees Mieke Gaynor and Gabrielle Smith

School chaplain and Associate Team Vicar, Sami Watts, and retired Sue Irwin support the team as required.

"The team come from varied theological backgrounds and experiences. We have in common the desire to see the Gospel preached in all our churches every week. We have learnt to love and encourage each other, practise collaborative working and be mutually accountable. We enjoy fun together, underpinned by prayer. We hope the new Rector will get to know us personally, discover how each of us like to be led and see us flourish individually and as a clergy Team."

Recent Team Rector history

By way of background and explanation to the Profile, Dave Bull was the Team Rector in Marlow for 13 years, with the last eight years as Area Dean of Wycombe Deanery. His role was full time in Marlow at the outset. In recent years, Dave built up and established the 4U clergy team, transformed the life of the Deanery by bringing vision and strategic direction across churches, became increasingly involved in Diocesan matters, broadened his leadership coaching nationally and latterly completed a Masters degree. He was appointed Bishop of Buckingham in February 2025.

As part of this developing ministry, Dave's direct role and input in All Saints Marlow gradually reduced over recent years, with this being a day per week in the past year. The Five Year Vision plan detailed on page 13 had called for the arrival of a Team Vicar, and Sarah Jones was licensed in April 2021. Whilst full time in ASM from the outset, her role and leadership has increased proportionally over the same time frame. Her locally funded post (LFP) contract ends in April 2026.

With a vibrant and growing context and mission, there is a sense with many of a continued desire and need to invest in having a full time Team Rector and a full time ASM Team Vicar, although some feedback suggests a review to support this case. Clearly, roles and responsibilities across church and the community will need to be reviewed following appointment of the new Team Rector and as vision and strategy are revisited and relaunched. Early discussion has suggested that the Team Rector's time will be largely ASM focussed, with the balance, say 15 to 25%, across the three sister churches.



The parish we serve

Safeguarding

The 4U Team is committed to safeguarding its congregations, clergy and those in its community. Each of the four churches has a Safeguarding Lead, with a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) taking overall responsibility, answerable to the Team Council and the Team Rector. The Safeguarding Lead for ASM has also undertaken the PSO training.

Any concerns are recorded and referred to the PSO who will discuss the matter with the referrer and pass the information on to the Diocesan Adviser if necessary.

The Safeguarding Dashboard is used to ensure

compliance with the Diocese's requirements and the PSO ensures that these are updated regularly. The Safeguarding Hub is starting to be used by some churches to keep records of training, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certification and Safer Recruitment requirements. Training is undertaken and renewed every three years in line with Diocese training requirements.

Safeguarding is a standing item on each PCC and CC agenda. Safeguarding Leads produce reports for these meetings, as well as a summary report for the Annual Meeting.

We have a DBS Administrator and Verifier who will remind people if their certificates need updating.

Enhanced checks are requested as required.

The website has a link to safeguarding information on its front page and posters are displayed around the churches with contact information.

Keeping children and vulnerable adults safe is of the highest priority to our churches. We are committed to the safeguarding, nurture and care of children and people of all ages in our church communities. We regularly review our procedures, and our safeguarding policy is in accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

The 4U Clergy Team wrote to the wider parish on this issue in February 2023 and confirmed that they are 'committed to moving forward together if we possibly can'. They 'believe that – whatever our own views and whatever happens next – we are called to be gracious and to love one another deeply as we work out what we think is right'. They said that 'we inevitably have a range of views and have found it a great blessing to listen in love to one another's thoughts on identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage'. The closing appeal was for the wider Parish to love and listen.

Through this time, the Team Vicars of the four churches have all continued to support the traditional Church of England practices.

There is a need for the new Rector to lead the 4U Clergy Team and the Parish collaboratively through continuing debate. The Team Rector should be supportive of the diversity of the churches and clergy, to love people where they are, to provide godly wisdom to associated pastoral needs and to lead a loving and welcoming community looking to Jesus.



All Saints Bisham

"We just came along to All Saints Bisham to get married. We were warmly welcomed into a very special community and we are still here - developing our own relationship with God"

"....Friends [of Bisham] is a very active community that brings the church, school and Abbey together..... connects the village....raising awareness of our beautiful Church"



St John the Baptist Little Marlow

"....one of the best kept village Churches in the area....obviously well used by a caring congregation"

"....a welcoming, supportive and social church"



The Lantern Marlow Bottom

"Since my wife died, I have my own family to support me. But I have another family as well, the Church"



All Saints Marlow

" a beacon in Marlow"

"fantastic reputation in the local area"

"amazing outward perspective"



All Saints Bisham

Who does our church serve?

Bisham is a small village, but our Church congregation is drawn from across the Marlow parish and beyond. Our aim is to serve the Parish and those who know and love the church. We see All Saints Bisham as the hub of the village community. However, the Church has a much wider appeal based upon its size, location next to the river, the historical links with Bisham Abbey and the friendly welcome we offer our visitors.

What is our vision for our church?

Our vision is of a 'connected community', with the church and our partners meeting the holistic needs of the community – spiritual, social, educational, physical and political – to the purpose of all having a living, intimate relationship with God.

We are situated between the C of E Bisham Academy Primary School and Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre. We also have a very active and supportive group of "Bisham Church Friends". Whilst both the Church and each of these three special partners have their own missions, we have a common goal in seeking to work collaboratively to improve the health and well-being of the community.

For centuries, the 'church' in Bisham has been manifest most clearly by a worshipping people gathering in the building called 'the church' on Sundays and other high days and holidays. As we continue to sustain, renew and develop those traditional roots, we believe that the 'church' in the future will also exist in different forms, in different places, and meet on different days at different times.

We do not know the shape and structure of the church the Holy Spirit is calling us to form but it may be that when Jesus said 'when two or three are gathered in

my name' he was giving us a clue. We can see several different groups, dispersed amongst the community, gathered together to study God's word, to pray, to worship, to sing, to socialise, to learn, to break bread together, to be connected with God and each other and Jesus is at the heart of them all.

What plans do we have for the future?

The following objectives and actions have been developed for discussion to help describe the opportunities which we believe are available in our community:-

- Develop new services which attract new worshippers to our church
- Explore new service / worship formats which can take place outside the church
- Deepen the links with Bisham C of E School
- Develop clear links with Bisham Abbey / National Sports Centre
- Extend Pastoral Support provision within the congregation and the community.
- Extend community use of the church
- Enhance the environmental role of the church
- Care for the fabric of the church
- Increase fundraising

Following the retirement of part-time SSM John Smith in May 2025, we expectantly await the appointment of the new Team Rector to guide us as we seek to advertise for a new Team Vicar in Bisham and confirm part time or full time status. Carol Cooper, our part-time SSM, will lead us during the vacancy period.

A draft Bisham Parish Profile has been prepared.

What are we hoping for in our Team Rector?

".... that our Team Rector recognises and encourages the individual appeal and unique attraction that All Saints Bisham offers the community within the wider 4U team. We are excited to explore a way forward for our church that blends both old and new, past and present. Traditional and contemporary services need to flourish alongside each other."



St John the Baptist Little Marlow

Who does our church serve?

The village of Little Marlow and local surrounding areas comprises approximately 650 houses with a population of circa 1,300. Several of the regular church attendees live outside the parish. The village heart includes the church, a church primary school, two pubs and a few shops.. There is a cricket ground, playground and football pitches with a pavilion that is used as a day nursery and the local parish council office.

What is special about our church?

The church was founded in the 12th century. It has a warm and friendly, committed congregation and a proactive church council. As part of the plans to become more outward looking and to have closer links with the school, we have employed a children's worker since 2022. We have recently expanded the role and recruited a children's and families' minister.

Since joining us in September 2023, Fiona Ellingham has also expanded our connection with two senior

living residences in Marlow. Apart from providing communion, there is now a regular morning get together when young mothers bring their babies and toddlers in to meet with the residents. She has also established a connection with an antenatal group that meets in the village.

The service programme is largely traditional including both Common Worship and BCP and an informal service for families and children. More recently Sunday school 'light' has been introduced. There are seven services a month comprising two 8.30 communions, four 11am services and an evensong. There are also special services for those attending the school.

St John the Baptist has a reputation for hospitality and being a social church which welcomes newcomers. A large proportion of the congregation stay behind for coffee and tea (and sometimes sherry or on special occasions, prosecco!) after the service. We have some form of event every month including an art and flower event for the patronal weekend, outdoor services, a pet service, Hymns and Pimms, Music at the Manor, a soup lunch, pancakes for Shrove Tuesday, a quiz night, a Seder meal, an organ recital and Harvest Lunch. These events attract not just members of the congregation but also local residents who may not be attenders at services in the church.

We are very fortunate to have a huge amount of support from the congregation with the day to day running of the church. The church has a silver Eco award and works with local environmental groups. We have developed a wildflower meadow and Wild Marlow built a bug house in the churchyard. Swift boxes were installed in 2023, and the church is home to the largest bat maternity roost in Buckinghamshire.

What are plans for the future?

Families and Children Worker – we hope to grow the relationships with families and children, the village school and the connection with the residential homes.

Continue to develop our links and improve communication with the wider community

What are we hoping for in our Team Rector?

"..... that the Team Rector is tolerant and accepting of the difference and individuality in people, their preferred forms of worship, views and beliefs. We would be looking for someone who is a leader and team player, giving support and guidance to both clergy and laity, who provides a strong sense of direction for the Team whilst supporting the spiritual growth and development of individual churches. They should be outgoing, an excellent communicator and a good listener. It is important for the Team Rector to understand that people have been worshipping here for centuries, and that sense of history makes it a special place to worship."



The Lantern Marlow Bottom

Who does our church serve?

Marlow Bottom is a post-war village with its own distinct identity. It occupies a mile-long valley with a population of about 3,300. Much of the land around the valley is protected woodland and lies within the Chilterns AONB. Marlow Bottom has a few shops, an Italian restaurant, a popular cafe and fish & chip shop. There is a 2-form entry primary school, (Burford), a private members club (The Barn Club), a village hall, a private nursery, the independent Rebellion Brewery and sheltered housing for senior citizens. Most housing throughout Marlow Bottom is an eclectic mix of bungalows and small and large houses with a variety of ages and families as well as retirees. There are a few flats, but affordable property for those in their twenties is scarce.

What is special about our church?

You will find a warm welcome from a small but growing all age congregation. Family and creativity are at the heart of what we do, trying new things to reach out to the community of Marlow Bottom



and beyond. As well as offering both traditional and contemporary Sunday services, throughout the year we hold several special services as well as Service Sundays where we serve the local residents by carrying out voluntary work. Our children and youth work is developing steadily and hard work from our Children and Families worker appointed last year is seeing a rise in young families attending our services as well as our weekly Babies and Toddler Group and monthly all age Community Corner event. Our music ministry is also growing with a small core group of musicians across the age range providing live music for our worship each week. Our previous curate has just gone on to be vicar of his own Church, but we are delighted to have a new curate lined up to join us in July 2025. We are proactively engaged with the wider community in Marlow Bottom and have strong links with the local primary school as well as the Baden Powell Groups who meet in our building. We are a visible presence at local events as well as holding our own, such as our much loved quiz and the Charlie Bear walk. Our Church building turns 60 years old this year and is no longer truly fit for purpose so some of our recent focus has been on our project to build a new Church on the existing site; an exciting opportunity that will benefit both our congregation and our community.

What are plans for the future?

Children's and Youth Worker: Heading towards a year in post, the contract lasts another two. They have made a great start to the role. Relationships with families are growing wider and deeper. To build on this work is a priority.

New building: Within a year, we hope to knock down our existing building and build a brand new better

designed building. It will cost £1.5m but the church is so committed to it that they have pledged £410,000 to date towards the project.

Curate: We are looking forward to welcoming our second curate, Tom with his wife, Annie, and two young girls. We are a good training post for a curate, offering experience of the breadth of church across the team while giving a very hands on practical experience of working in a small church.

What are we hoping for in our Team Rector?

"Someone who is led by the Spirit and the Word; a person who praises, listens, reflects then acts. One who will develop into the role showing a respectful understanding of our history and community. Approachable and empathetic, able to reflect the values of existing clergy whilst leading the team forward sympathetically, bringing fresh ideas and creativity to champion new approaches which will reach all ages and stages. Energy and enthusiasm will be key as this good preacher leads by example in their work whilst supporting their fellow clergy with proven managerial skills."

"Support and guide the team clergy in all that they do, practically as well as spiritually. Draw the churches in the 4U team together, not just for the clergy but for the wider congregations so that all feel included. We want our new Team Rector to be keen to be a part of our Lantern family, support our initiatives and challenge them where appropriate. We are building a new church for our community, and it is important that our new Team Rector is active in helping us in this exciting project."

All Saints Marlow

Values

ASM now has a strong evangelical tradition with a traditional understanding of the authority of scripture, an openness to the leading of God's Spirit, and a history of care for the needy. Five years ago, we prayerfully sought God's guidance for the next phase of our life as God's church. This discernment developed into a set of values summarised in the 'wheel' below.



Vision

Around the time these values were settled on, ASM's five year Vision & Strategy evolved, resulting in a number of shorter-term projects such as changing pews to chairs, recruiting an additional vicar, as well as the creation of new teams to reimagine the Five Marks of Mission. This was shared as 'The Five Year Vision' with the church at the start of 2020, and Covid, and is summarised in the box on the right.

2020 Extract ...

Who are we? What is God calling us to be and to do?

Over the years as we have tried to respond to his call, God has shaped us to be the church we are today. We have articulated eight values that describe who God is calling us to be. They are summarised by the words "God Brings New Life" and are described in this diagram. These values call us to action. We believe God is calling us to invite Marlow to share God's love. We believe He has amazing plans for Marlow that we will see as we respond.

Where is the Holy Spirit leading us?

- We see some opportunities that we believe God is opening up for us:
- Being at the heart of the wider community becoming a more 'town-centric' Church
- Reaching out to younger adults, particularly men
- Making more of the opportunity to serve Marlow's schools
- Communicating better with each other and the wider community
- Taking our welcome of new people to another level

What should our priorities be for the next five years?

- We believe we will only be able to take these opportunities if we:
- Recommit ourselves to following wherever Jesus leads us
- Create a more flexible and welcoming church space, including replacing our pews with chairs
- Ensure we have the right combination of congregations
- Increase our personal engagement with people
- Broaden our welcome from first click onwards
- Invest in our leaders
- Reimagine our mission

Where are we now?

There has been great change for ASM, with much fruit and growth. God does indeed bring New Life. We have seen new people attracted to church for the first time, people coming to faith and joining the church family, a new knitting together of groups and a 'family feel', enhanced worship, and investments in our staff team and facilities.

... but some of it looks different from what we expected. Some pace has been slower, with mission and outreach events taking time to gain traction. There has been far less activity in the digital space than we had envisaged in our plans, with welcome and communication, for example, being delivered far more relationally.

Where next?

With so much change in recent years, there is a need to reflect on what we sense God has been doing. We value being 'Led by God', genuinely believing that the Holy Spirit is at work shaping each area of the church's life. It seems time to revisit and review the strategy more broadly and look at new ways to express it.

God has sent us so many new leaders of late, not least in our staff team. We must be open to new ideas, new energy and God-given vision, embracing these new people and gifts.

Although it was memorable, communication of the strategy has not worked well in some respects - some saw it as complex, others a one-size-fits-all i.e. a project-style approach that works well for organising events but doesn't work for pastoral care.

Going forward, there is a need to

- review each element of the five-year strategy
- assess where we stand and what has been achieved
- revise and recommend
- pray, discuss and discern.

This re-planning and re-envisioning of ASM would seem to be a priority following the appointment of the Team Rector.

Worship and Welcome

"a true community church, with focus on inclusion however you worship"

"God is leading us into a deeper place of worship and prayer"

Services are led by a mixture of clergy and lay people. All services include an emphasis on Bible teaching and look to the leading of the Spirit through worship. Our current pattern of worship is as follows:

Every Sunday at 9.15am

Our traditional communion service - around 85 adults and children gathering each week, with children leaving after 15 minutes for their groups. Worship is accompanied by the organ and church choirs. The service is live streamed via Youtube. Coffee is served after the service in the Church Hall.

Every Sunday at 10.59am

Our contemporary service with around 130 (excl. baptisms) adults and children attending. Children and youth leave after 15 minutes for groups. Worship is informally led by the Worship Band. Communion takes place once a month and similarly an all-age service is held monthly. All services are live-streamed via Youtube. Coffee is served in Church before and after this service.

1st Sunday of every month at 6.30pm – The Well

An informal time of contemporary worship, testimonies, reflection and prayer. This service was introduced in February this year and we have seen around 40 people gather.

Every Wednesday at 10.30am

A traditional midweek spoken and shorter communion service where around 25 gather, then meet for coffee and cake.

Evensong

This service was re-introduced last year, following the appointment of a Director of Music. Plans are for six services this year, attracting 60-80 people, supported by guest choirs and our home team.

In the last year, we have started to hold occasional combined congregation services on Sunday morning,

including the Annual Meeting and in the Summer. This initiative is being explored further.

We continue to develop and involve lay preachers and service leaders. Helen White is a Licensed Lay Minister and Alison Southgate is an Authorised Preacher.

The Worship Band, led by staffer Nick Collard, is a distinctive feature of ASM with proficient musicians and the involvement of youth. This team supports many services and activities across church and beyond including community services, school assemblies and Lighthouse Marlow.

The Christmas season continues to be a very significant time in church. Including various school carol services, we saw around 5,000 through our doors over the 2024 Advent weeks, up 18% on the previous year.



Welcome Teams

"accessible and welcoming"

"great coffee"

Welcome is integral at both Sunday morning services, connecting with visitors, informing and seeking to introduce them to others and the active life of the church. Welcome cards are completed, and information is linked into weekly e-newsletters, ChurchSuite, termly welcome lunches and Alpha invitations.

Church is open every day in the week from 9am to 5 pm for passing tourists, visitors and for prayer. There is an opportunity to be explored for volunteers to welcome, guide, witness and pray with visitors.

Prayer Teams

Prayer ministry teams are involved at both Sunday morning services. From a zoom meeting early on Sunday, they share words of knowledge/pictures of prayer needs in the services. The teams then pray and minister after the services in the Prayer Chapel, with occasional prayer amongst the congregation following appeals for responses to the preaching. Team training is provided and published prayer ministry and safeguarding guidelines are followed.

Ministry and Mission

Alongside our Sunday gatherings, a wide range of activities take place throughout the week.

Equipping

"a need to engage laity in all aspects of church"

"encouraged to be more like Jesus"

Connect Groups, mostly in homes, are key to discipleship and pastoral care. We have 10 groups with different foci - some Bible study and some online courses - which are a great way to share and deepen faith, build relationships and nurture fellowship. More leaders are required to launch new groups.

Prayer is essential to grow our relationship with God. We have a regular pattern of prayer gatherings - each Tuesday morning and a monthly Wednesday Worship & Prayer evening, with our Prayer Chapel used as a resource in the church building. We have run 24/7 prayer during the days between Ascension and Pentecost and joined in the global movement of prayer. In the busy-ness of life and church, we find it challenging to gather in numbers for prayer.

Children & Youth are a vital part of our church. ASM has a growing number of children and young people engaging with the groups that take place on a Sunday, as well as youth groups midweek. Our dedicated team is regularly involved in our local infant, junior and secondary schools, visiting weekly to run clubs, take school collective worship, teach music, school trips and have been invited to help with RE lessons.

Our youth team now meet with over 50 students across our two local secondary schools, who also held their school Christmas carol services in church. The team has pioneered the United weekend away, socials and worship nights, along with several churches from Wycombe and Bourne End. We also have a girls' Connect Group for 14-18 year olds, through which members have been able to share their faith with their friends and make the decision to start following Jesus.

Baptisms (inside & out!) are a great blessing as we have welcomed 18 infant and child baptisms in 2024, in addition to three adults, one of whom was fully submerged in the Thames! Our team welcomes parents and children through the many groups and activities we share with the community, reaching out and providing a connection to gently take the first steps towards knowing Jesus. Confirmations are held twice a year in a Deanery church.

Training

We introduced School of Theology in 2022 as a way for people to delve deeper into theology with up to 85 attending. Teaching resources from St Mellitus were used each term. We are committed to doing theology in the context of worship and so always

begin and end in worship and prayer. School of Theology continues as a key initiative, with support this year from Gateway Theology School.

Further training courses are planned for this year, including the 'Worship Central' course.

Groups attend the annual New Wine festival and other New Wine events including regional leadership training and Women's conferences. Interns have also attended the Discipleship Year Programme.

Reaching Out

"a vision to make Marlow a go-to location for Christian discovery"

Schools

We have a wonderful relationship with our church schools, [Marlow C of E Infant](#) (Sandygate) and [Holy Trinity C of E Junior](#). We run lunch and after school clubs and regularly lead Collective Worship. Youth Alpha and mental health support work take place at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School as well as supporting one-off events. We also run Doughnut Club across several year groups in both our local secondary schools (Borlase and Great Marlow) where we play games, discuss faith-based questions and of course eat doughnuts! Church members and clergy are involved as governors in the church schools.

"more involvement with clergy than ever before"

"we have a lot of support from the church"



Teeney Saints

We run Teeney Saints on a Thursday morning for some 60 pre-schoolers and their carers. It includes a time of worship, play and craft, plus cake!

Transforming Lives for Good (TLG)

A growing team of ASM 'coaches' have been trained by this Christian charity to support children in Holy Trinity school to cope with their challenges and worries, helping their emotional well-being.



Lighthouse Marlow

ASM is a major staff and volunteer supporter of this cross-church summer holiday week for 250 children to learn about Jesus, have fun and make new friends. Supported by over 200 volunteers, around 70 of these between 12-17 years old. The theme last year was Jesus Rocks, with the story and activities each day linked to a Bible story.

Alpha and Discipleship Hub

With ongoing interest and demand from many exploring faith, we run an 'Alpha course' three times a year during the academic terms. On the same evening, we also hold an Alpha continuation group, and additional groups for bible study and discipleship. In effect, there are four tracks of participants each Monday.

The Alpha course 'Holy Spirit' evening each term is open to all in church, providing training and equipping in being filled by the Spirit, leading in ministering to others and stepping out in using the gifts of the Spirit.

The Hub is a place where new group leaders are also being trained and developed.

Choirs & Music

Like many groups during Covid, our choirs reduced in numbers and some ceased. This last year has seen new life in our choral tradition. We now have a growing Junior choir with 16 new members, a Senior choir and a new Cantorum choir. Supported by our Director and Associate Director of Music, we continue to nurture these groups. To support our love of music, we also hold free Sunday afternoon recitals. These provide for a wide variety of instruments and performances.



Workplace Chaplaincy

Started in November 2022, Marlow Workplace Chaplaincy's aim is to take the love of God into the High Street, to show the shopkeepers and owners that God cares for their well-being and prosperity. Testimonies are shared, prayer is given for the owners, staff and premises and prayer requests are shared for specific family situations. Over two years on, over 40 shops are visited.

Meals from Marlow (MFM)

Towards the end of March 2020, during Covid, a group of fundraising businesspeople, including local celebrity chef Tom Kerridge and our Team Rector, set up MFM to support local people struggling with the cost of living or simply in need. During 2024, 12,560 meals, averaging 246 per week, were delivered to local households from donations of £37,000.



The distribution is largely managed by church volunteers, with heavily discounted supplies provided by retailer COOK as part of their community support initiative. This activity operates as a Restricted Fund within the parish charity, with ASM clergy and treasurer involved in the management committee.



Marlow Charities

Local charities Marlow United Charities (MUC) and Oxford Road Educational Charity (OREC), from Victorian roots, are run largely by ASM church member trustees and chaired by clergy. Last year, donations of £32,000 through MUC enabled the distribution of 400 £80 food vouchers to Marlow families in need. OREC's properties generate income which benefits projects in Holy Trinity school.

Bellringing

ASM has a long flourishing tradition of bellringing, with an excellent-sounding ring of eight bells which are used extensively by an all-age band. Ringing takes place before the 9:15 am Sunday service, on Tuesday evenings for practices, on Saturday mornings for quarter peals or more practice, for weddings and on some Sunday afternoons for evensong. The bells are also rung for special events and, from time to time, by visiting ringers.

Community Involvement

"as mayors, we value All Saints as part of the Marlow community"

Being the main parish church, there is a wide breadth of Town engagement including the large Remembrance service and anniversaries, Civic Celebration service, 'Praise in the Park', Regatta churches together service, Town Christmas carols, attending events for MFM, and school and charity functions.

Compassion UK

Around 60 children are sponsored monthly by ASM members, largely in Tanzania. An annual Compassion Sunday is held, with a visiting speaker. Beyond this, our world mission focus has yet to broaden out since the pandemic.



Weddings

2024 saw 31 weddings take place in the church. This is a significant activity for many serving teams, including the 'Marriage Preparation' course.

Opportunities and Challenges

"allowing the congregations to feel recognised, appreciated, valued and involved"

"need to maintain momentum"

"more involved to cover all areas....spread the load.....and not suffer from burnout"

Deeply grateful for all that God has done amongst us so far, we are looking for a Team Rector who will lead ASM into the next season. With a deep desire to bring God's good news to the world around us, including the disadvantaged such as meal distribution and child sponsorship, and recognising the huge opportunity of a central location and large space, we are keen to grow in how we touch our community and impact wherever we find ourselves day to day.

We want to keep united in love across our diverse congregations, with a love of God's word and a desire for more of his presence in our lives through the Holy Spirit. We want to grow as a welcoming, connected community and find new ways of developing and releasing leadership gifting within the church and for our community. We long for continued strong biblical teaching, greater intimacy in prayer and worship and deeper discipleship.

There is an amazing gifted and committed team of staff and volunteers, but we need to be led and introduced into new structures and processes that will harness, consolidate and aid our present growth in attendance and activities.

This is a summary of the 'what and where', the 'opportunities and challenges', that we are discerning the Spirit stirring in our hearts:

Strategic

- review of vision and strategy, re-planning and re-envisioning of ASM
- improving communications - messaging, resourcing social media and website
- further developing and embedding lay leadership training, leading to reproducible discipleship (disciples making disciples)
- building staff and volunteer structures and processes to sustain a larger united church
- review of investment in two full time clergy posts
- explore a property vision encompassing better utilisation and improved facilities for the church and community
- lack of curate accommodation

Discipleship

- envisioning all of church to have prayer as a priority. We acknowledge our dependence on God, yet it seems difficult to gather together
- further training and equipping church in being led by the Holy Spirit, experiencing his presence in our gatherings and exercising spiritual gifts and fruits, being naturally supernatural across church
- exploring innovative worship forms (contemplative, arts, music), holding the contemporary with the traditional
- growing and broadening our Planned Giving support
- developing, pastoring and training teams of volunteers, against backdrop of tougher times with employment and wellbeing
- ongoing development and training of Connect group leaders, providing capacity for growth being experienced

Pastoral

- better exhibiting a generous and hospitable spirit, welcoming the lonely, providing for the needy, opening our homes and being good neighbours
- be renowned for our 'elderly and vulnerable' pastoral care

Looking outwards

- working harder at being accessible for the seeker and across Marlow society in our vocabulary and practices - in services, comms, mission and ministries
- broaden our mission horizon beyond Marlow to the nation and overseas, including financial and prayer support
- building on our musical heritage, contemporary and traditional





Appendices

Appendix A - Marlow District

Name	County / District	Population Census 2001-04-29	Population Census 2011-03-27	Population Census 2021-03-21
Marlow	Buckinghamshire	13,958	14,211	14,644

Marlow

- 📍 **14,644** Population [2021] - Census
- 📏 **4.401 km²** Area
- 📊 **3,327/km²** Population Density [2021]
- 📈 **0.30%** Annual Population Change [2011 → 2021]

🇬🇧 Marlow: town and civil parish in Buckinghamshire, England – [Official Website](#) – Local dialing code: 01628 – Postal code: SL7 – Near waters: River Thames

Further information about the population structure:



The Great Marlow wider parish population is around 21,000, putting it in the top 2% of parishes in the country and one of the largest in the Wycombe Deanery.

Wikipedia Marlow page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlow,_Buckinghamshire

Appendices

Appendix B - The Rectory

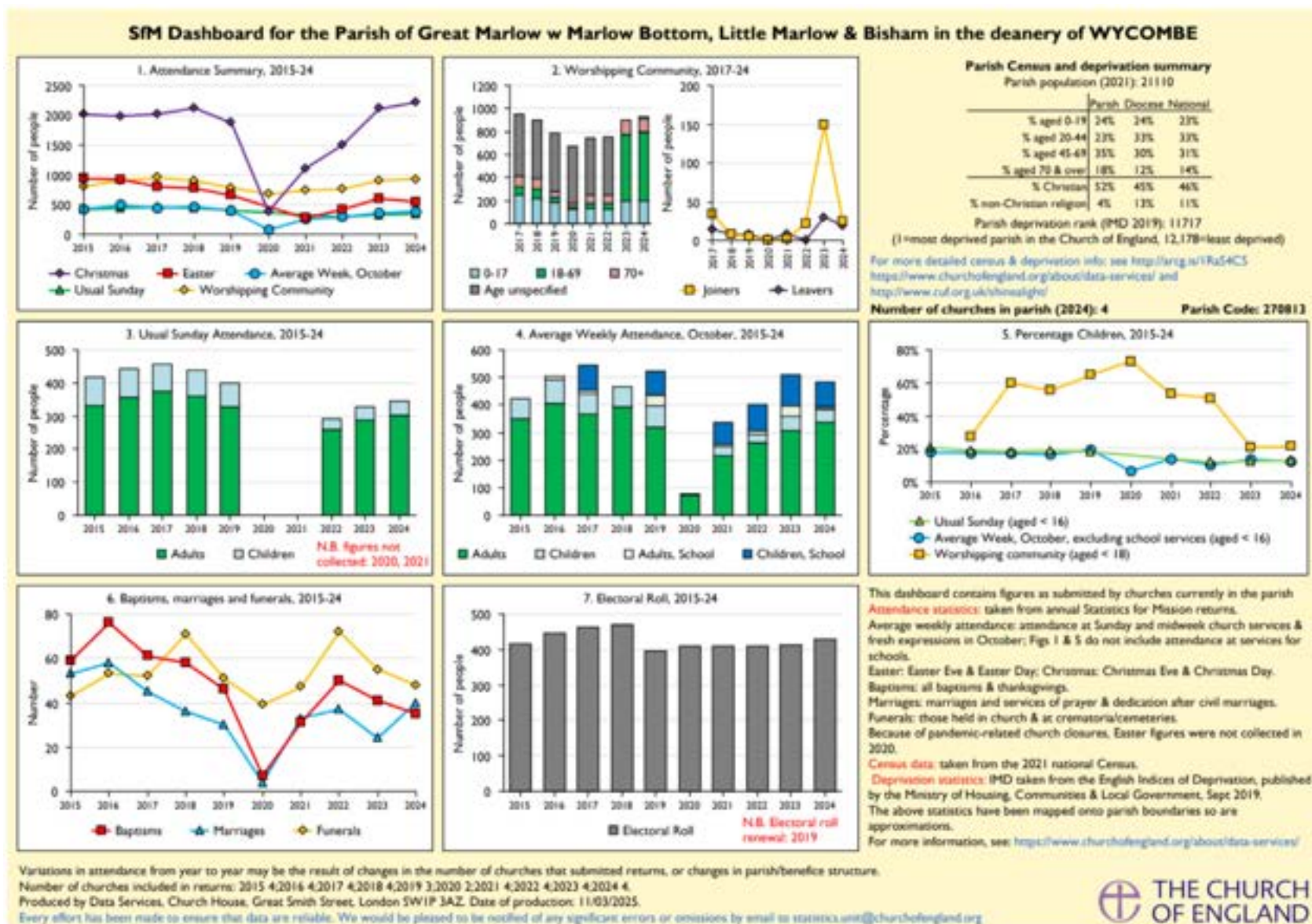


The Rectory is a large 5 bedroom detached house with a double garage and off-road parking for a further 2 cars. The house is situated on The Causeway in Marlow, just a minute walk from ASM.

Marlow has a great range of shops, supermarkets, bars and restaurants. Marlow also has a great selection of schools at all levels from nursery to sixth form including Sandygate, Holy Trinity, Great Marlow and Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, all within walking distance of the Rectory. Local recreational facilities include walking, riding and cycling in the Hambleden Valley and along the Thames Path, clubs for rugby, football, tennis, hockey, cricket & bowls. The Court Garden leisure complex, just a few minutes from the Rectory, has a swimming pool and gymnasium. Local transport links are also very good; the Marlow bypass (A404) connects to the M40 in the north and M4 to the south providing easy access to Heathrow airport and the M25. Marlow's railway station links to the Elizabeth line and fast main line to central London at Maidenhead. Faster trains into London go from High Wycombe to Marylebone.

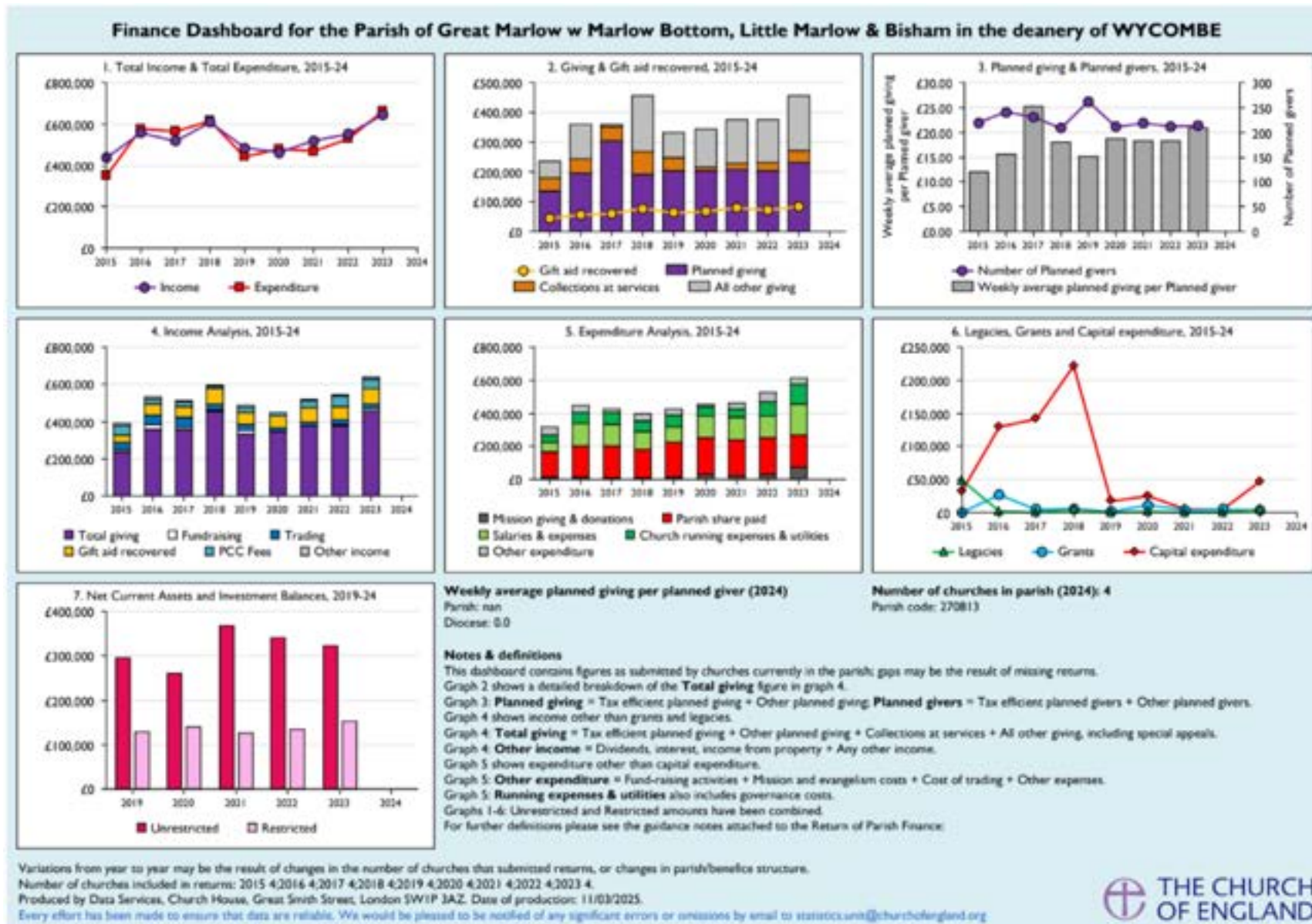
Appendices

Appendix C - Congregation Data



Appendices

Appendix D - Finance



Appendices

Appendix D - Finance

ASM represents 68% of the whole parish income and expenditure. It continues to fund 8 salaried staff, some being part-time. This is the largest expense line at £160,000 in 2024. In keeping with the Vision Value of 'generosity', we continue to focus on increasing Planned Giving and aiming for a broader base of supporters. We saw ASM giving increase 10% in 2024 and are looking for a faith stretching budgeted donation income of £374,000 in 2025, up 13%. Total income in 2024 was almost £500,000.

ASM currently has satisfactory general fund reserves of three months budgeted expenditure going into 2025.

Each 4U church has a treasurer and is accounted for and reported on separately during the year.

The 4U treasurer maintains a shared cost budget of c£30,000 and oversees the year-end consolidated PCC Annual Report & Accounts and Independent Examination.

Appendix E - ASM Staff

Our current salaried staff team includes a mixture of full and part time(PT) roles:

- Team Vicar - Sarah Jones*
- Worship & Production Leader - Nick Collard
- Children's Leader - Laura-Anne Putterford
- Youth Leader - Emily Clark (nearly FT)
- Director of Music - Mervyn Williams (PT)
- Assistant Director of Music - Rhidian Jones (PT)
- Operations Manager - Gary Jones
- Parish Office Administrator - Alison Grottrup (PT)

* (this is an ASM church funded role (LFP) as part of the 5 year vision, with the contract ending in April 2026)

Appendices

Appendix F - ASM Buildings

Church

Though there was a church in Marlow as early as 1070, the present ASM church is Victorian, built after the spire of the old church collapsed in 1831. A new church was constructed of Bath stone, topped by a graceful spire soaring 170 feet above the town, and is Grade II Listed. The combination of spire and bridge form one of the most unforgettable Thames sights. The most recent significant changes to the interior of the building were the building of stairs in the narthex to create access to a new meeting room and three additional toilets, plus the building of a kitchenette, creche and sound booth. The change from pews to chairs was completed in 2024, along with the removal of the central aisle carpet. The building can host up to 350 people and many events are held in the church including community and charity events, barn dances, and classical and choral music concerts, with some of these through external hirers.

The church and ground floor toilet are accessible. The churchyard has been closed for many years, although we have a Garden of Remembrance for the burial of ashes. We have a silver Eco award.

Church Hall, including staff office

The Parish Hall was presented to ASM in 1851 as a school for boys. At some point in the 20th century the building stopped being used as a school and became a church hall. In the 1980s it was refurbished and reconfigured to its present form. The building is Victorian, typical of its era with local red brick, and consists of two main halls, one larger full height at the east end and a smaller one at the west end. There is a kitchen and toilets. Above the kitchen and smaller hall is a large office area for church staff. Externally, there is a yard to the east with a few stores. The ground floor halls and toilets are accessible. Today, the church hall is hired out for a variety of uses, including exercise classes, children's classes, birthday parties, charity events and community groups.

Parish Office

The Parish Office is in the northeast corner of the churchyard. It was built around 35 years ago and is a rectangular single storey brick building. From this busy space, both staff and volunteers run the 4U parish administration, ASM church and church hall bookings, organising weddings, funerals, baptisms and photocopying support.

Quinquennial Review

This was carried out in 2024 for all three buildings. No major repair works are required, or foreseen, and all minor action points will be met out of existing budgets.

Property Vision

In recent years, informal discussions have taken place on the property needs to upgrade entrance and welcome spaces, offices and community usage and to review 'fit for purpose' requirements including sound, heating and net zero. There is great scope to explore better utilisation and improvement of the property assets.

Appendices

Appendix G - Diocese & Deanery

Diocese of Oxford and Archdeaconry of Buckingham

The Diocese of Oxford serves the mission of the Church in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Diocese comprises over 600 parishes, with over 800 churches, serving a diverse population of more than 2 million people located in all types of settings.

Due to the size and complexity of the Diocese, there are three area bishops who exercise strategic and pastoral oversight for their areas. The Marlow Parish is in the Buckingham archdeaconry and the area bishop is the Bishop of Buckingham, Dave Bull, former Marlow Team Rector, who moved from Marlow to be the Area Bishop in February 2025. Archdeacon of Buckingham is Guy Elmore and Chris Bull is Associate Archdeacon of Buckingham.

Through prayer, listening and discernment a common vision has emerged for the Diocese of Oxford. The vision is based on the qualities described in The Beatitudes and addresses what kind of church we are called to be, "A more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world: Contemplative, Compassionate, Courageous".

Our Common Vision continues to emerge as we identify together areas of our common life where we believe God is calling us to focus. The diocesan focal areas are not a description of everything we do, but these priorities are being supported centrally by resources, training, conferences, workshops, and much more. The diocese is inviting benefices and their clergy to share a vision rather than demanding a response, motivated by hope not driven by anxiety, and thereby to flourish in their ministry. It is hoped that clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Buckingham will want to commit to this vision and encourage their parish to share in becoming a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world. www.oxford.anglican.org

The Diocese is committed to a high level of support and training for clergy. Successful candidates who are taking up posts of first responsibility will be expected to participate in Pastoral Supervision Groups.

Wycombe Deanery

Our Deanery, Wycombe, is a family of 34 churches spread across 28 parishes in and around High Wycombe. Following the move of Dave Bull to Bishop of Buckingham, the new Area Dean is James Dwyer in Flackwell Heath. Like any family, this one is significantly diverse, stretching from the Thames Valley in the South to the Chilterns in the North. We have urban areas in High Wycombe, a few small towns and dozens of villages in the surrounding countryside. One thing we share in common is a vision to see the churches of Wycombe Deanery flourishing individually, working effectively together and contributing to the renewal of the wider church. We believe passionately that God is at work renewing and reforming his church in this country and we are committed to playing our part in this work. We believe that as we join together, each sharing freely what God has given us, the Spirit will lead us into growth as we follow Jesus together. www.wycombedeanery.com

To guide us on this journey, we have articulated four principles that we hope will underpin all we do together:

- Serving our fellowships - The Deanery exists to serve its churches
- Shaping our future - We take responsibility for leading our churches into growth
- Spurring on our friends - Learning to work better together
- Sharing the fire - Growing the vision

Appendices

