

# Rector's Report to the APCM

## Looking Back at 2025

*“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”*

· Isaiah 43:19

As we reflect on the life of the Naseby Group of Churches over the past year, 2025 can best be described as a year of **careful and prayerful transition**. It has been a period in which we have begun the important and necessary work of change · not for change's sake, but in order to lay the foundations required for long-term sustainability and growth across our seven parishes.

## The New Service Pattern: A Necessary Shift

The introduction of the new service pattern or ~~Streams~~ in September 2025 marked a significant milestone in the life of the Benefice. This change emerged from a realistic assessment of our resources, alongside a shared desire to ensure that our worshipping life remains resilient well into the future.

### 10.00 am Morning Worship

By gathering in larger groups, we have begun to experience the benefits of a greater *critical mass*. While this means travelling further at times, the resulting energy and warmth in our worship and fellowship are early signs of a more interconnected church family · one in which visitors and newcomers can more easily feel a sense of belonging.

### 4.00 pm Fun@4

This afternoon service is an intentional attempt to reach across generations. It remains in its early stages, but the sight of families and long-standing members worshipping together in a more informal setting suggests that we are beginning to find a rhythm that can accommodate new growth. During 2025, we launched a refreshed Café Church in Welford and began planning new initiatives in Clipston (*Pizza and Praise*) and Naseby (*The Welcome Patch – Allotment Church*).

### 6.15 pm Evening Worship

As we adapt our service patterns, the continuity of Evensong provides an important balance, honouring our heritage while we explore new expressions of worship. I have been particularly encouraged by those who have grown in confidence in leading services, especially within our congregationally led worship.

## The Agricultural Stream

Remembering and celebrating the agricultural heritage of our villages remains an important part of our shared life. Services shaped around the agricultural year continue to offer fresh opportunities to reflect together on how and why we worship.

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## Reaching Our Communities Beyond Services

While we seek greater unity across the Benefice, we remain intentional about preserving the unique character and vocation of each parish. We continue to explore what mission looks like in different ways in each village.

Particular highlights include the continued success of Sibbertoft Sunday Teas, which enjoyed their most successful year to date, and the early work exploring how Haselbech Church might serve the wider village through community events such as an annual lecture. The first of these, focusing on the *Invictus Games*, was very well received.

The Orbell Café in Clipston continues to provide an important space for community building on Wednesday mornings, alongside the monthly Sing for Wellbeing.

Revd Lesley and I have continued to visit the three local primary schools within the Benefice, leading assemblies, while Karien has also worked directly with individual classes in Welford. Our regular services at Sibbertoft Manor remain a valued source of comfort, worship, and community for residents.

Alongside this are many other activities · fetes, music festivals, concerts, fundraising events, poppy cascades and reflective services by candlelight · all of which help to strengthen community life within our villages. We should rightly feel proud of the ways in which our churches continue to serve and support those around us.

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## **Celebrating Shared Ministry**

The arrival of Revd Lesley and Bob during 2025 was a significant and timely blessing, providing the additional capacity needed to support this period of transition. Their wisdom · together with that of the wider ministry team · has been a steadying and encouraging presence as we navigate change together.

I am very conscious that change places additional demands on those in leadership and ministry. I want to thank the whole team sincerely for their patience, openness, and resilience as we take these necessary steps forward.

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## **With Thanks..**

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our Churchwardens, Treasurers, Secretaries and PCC members for their steady and faithful leadership throughout the year. I especially wish to acknowledge:

- **The Practical Servants** · those who clean, wash linens, and sustain the behind-the-scenes life of our churches.
- **The Welcomers** · those who offer tea, soup, and hospitality, creating spaces of warmth and welcome.
- **The Handy Men and Women** · those who care for our historic buildings, clearing gutters and tending to the practical challenges of ancient spaces.

Each of these ministries, however small they may seem, is a vital brick in the foundations we are building together.

## **Looking Ahead**

2025 was not the end of a process, but the beginning of a necessary shift. We have taken the first, sometimes difficult, steps towards a more sustainable future. As we move through 2026, we do so prayerfully and with hope, trusting that the foundations we lay today will support the growth of tomorrow.

With every blessing,

**Rev. Tom Grant**, Rector of the Naseby Group of Churches