

# Salem Baptist Church

## Annual Report 2025

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## From the Minister

As I look back over 2025 at Salem, my strongest feeling is gratitude. Gratitude to God for his faithfulness, and gratitude for the ways so many of you have served, prayed, given, welcomed, and loved.

I began 2025 returning from sabbatical at the end of 2024, time set aside primarily to complete and submit my doctoral work. I remain deeply thankful to the church for granting that space; it was a gift of trust, generosity, and encouragement.

In March I had my PhD viva. The outcome was not what I had hoped for, and the examiners concluded that the thesis could not proceed to the awarding of a doctorate. It was a difficult moment, and for a while I felt the weight of disappointment more than I expected. Many of you were kind enough simply to pray for me in that season, and that meant more than you may know. At the same time, I am grateful for all that the process has given me: deeper study, sharpened thought, and sustained engagement with Scripture and theology.

Walking through that experience reminded me again that the foundations we preach are the foundations we must stand on. Our identity is not found in our achievements but in the love of God seen in Christ on the cross.

Salem's vision remains clear: to make missionary disciples of Jesus, people who love God, love one another, and love God's world. This is not just a slogan for a noticeboard but a real description of what we believe God is doing among us. Discipleship is not something we finish; it is something we practise, week by week, as we receive Christ again, listen to his voice, and follow his way in the everyday realities of life.

Our guiding verse for 2025 has been Jesus' picture of the wise man who built his house upon the rock. In a year that has included change, pressure, and plenty of competing voices, we have kept returning to simple foundations, building not on what is shifting but on Christ himself and on his words put into practice.

This commitment to foundation-building has shaped our Sunday teaching across the year. We have explored what it means to live as disciples of our Rabbi Jesus in the simple pattern of being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing the things he would do if he were me. We also spent time in a series on the name of God, learning again that Christian faith is not first an idea but a relationship: knowing the One who calls us and learning to trust him.

One of the great joys of this year has been seeing Salem's life widen and deepen at the same time. We have welcomed new people, celebrated baptisms and membership, and supported one another through transition and loss. In particular, we are deeply grateful for

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the ministry of Helen Alderton during her time serving among us as Ministry Assistant. Her wisdom, steadiness, faith, and willingness to serve have enriched our shared life in countless ways. While it is right that she continues her ministerial formation in a new setting, she is already very much missed.

I have also felt again this year the importance of food in the life of the church, not merely as hospitality but as something deeply theological. Again and again in the gospels, Jesus forms people at tables. Salem is at its best when we are church as table rather than temple. We have seen that in the faithful work of Sue and others making a shared meal after the Hub a genuine space of welcome; in Salem Suppers; in the Men's Breakfast running monthly throughout 2025; in the food shared after a ramble; in the BBQ and Christmas dinner; and in bring and share lunches that turn a Sunday into an unhurried space for conversation and belonging. These moments help us practise love, deepen relationships, and build the kind of community where faith can be explored and strengthened.

It has also been encouraging to see the introduction of Campfire Groups, creating spaces for Scripture, prayer, friendship, and support. The life of our church is strengthened when we move from being a crowd on Sunday to becoming a family through the week. We are grateful to everyone who has opened their home, hosted, led, and participated.

We give thanks too for the ministries that nurture the next generation: Tots, Junior Church, Lighthouse, and our Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides. These are not extras; they are central to our calling, and they rely on a great deal of faithful, often unseen service.

Salem has continued to seek to love God's world through community events, care home visiting, CAP, the food pantry, Teams4U, Christian Aid, and our mission partners overseas. If we love God, we must also love our neighbour.

Of course, the year has not been without challenges. Capacity and tiredness are real pressures. We are not a large church, and there are ministries that depend on the faithfulness of a relatively small number of people. That is both a strength and a vulnerability. If we are to continue building on the rock rather than on shifting sand, we will need to remain attentive and intentional. The year ahead gives us the opportunity to renew our commitment to prayer, to serving, to giving, and to inviting others into the life of Christ.

And yet, as this report records, we have seen grace in our midst this year. We have seen people step forward. We have seen generosity that does not make headlines but makes community possible. We have seen signs of spiritual hunger that remind us that our task is not finished.

The call to make missionary disciples does not belong to a programme; it belongs to all of us. Thank you for your prayers, your generosity, and your love for one another.

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The year ahead invites us to go deeper in prayer, wider in welcome, and bolder in witness. If we continue to build on Christ and on his words put into practice, there is no telling what kind of fruit God may yet grow among us.

My prayer for 2026 is not simply that we would maintain what we have, but that we would mature, deepen, and multiply as a community shaped by Jesus, rooted in Christ, built up in him, and overflowing with gratitude.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Andy

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## Our Vision Statement

### SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH

#### **:: making missionary disciples of Jesus ::**

*Mt 28:19 ... go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*

#### **:: who love God ::**

*Deut 6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

#### **:: who love one another ::**

*John 13:34 'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'*

#### **:: love God's world ::**

*Gen 3:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

*Lev 19:18 ... love your neighbour as yourself ...*

*Jer 29:7 ... seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper*

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***making missionary disciples of Jesus who***

***:: love God :: love one another:: love God's world ::***

***>> by explaining the truth of Jesus Christ***

*Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

*1 Peter 3:15 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*

*>> By encouraging one another to be Spirit filled disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ*

*1Thess 5:11 ... encourage one another and build each other up ...*

*Heb 10:24-25 let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds*

*>> By equipping and enabling one another to witness, in word and deed, to the Lord Jesus Christ*

*Rom 12:6-8 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

*Eph 4:11-12 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*

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## **Safeguarding Statement**

As members of Salem, we commit ourselves to the safeguarding of all, (children, young people and vulnerable adults).

It is the responsibility of each one of us to seek to prevent the abuse of anyone, and to report any abuse that is discovered.

We recognise that as a church our programmes of outreach and evangelism are an important part of Salem's work and therefore, we commit ourselves to pray regularly for all those directly involved.

We recognise that this work is the responsibility of the whole church.

We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working in these areas, whether paid or volunteer.

The church is committed to supporting, resourcing, training and supervising those who carry out this work.

The church is committed to following the relevant official guidance from the Home Office and any relevant guidance from the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Each worker must follow the current safeguarding policy and procedures as laid out. Salem has appointed Ann Bailey and James Griffin as the Designated Person (team of 2) to whom any specific concerns must be addressed.

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## From the Diaconate

The team of Deacons meet together on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month. In between meetings, there are plenty of exchanges and work completed using online tools. This has meant that we can often clear some of the meeting time for bigger subjects that need more discussion. We are a small team, but we are working well together and sharing the load.

In March, at the AGM, Marion and James stepped down having completed their terms as Assistant Secretary and deacon respectively. Paul was voted in as Treasurer, Chris as Assistant Secretary and Krisztina as a deacon. We are grateful to them all for standing.

In February, Michael and Malachi were brought forward for dedication by their parents. This was a joyful occasion, and also marked the end of the family's time with us as they returned to the USA shortly afterwards

We celebrated with the Jardim family as Mario Junior married Michaella in April.

Becky was baptised in April and accepted into membership. This was a wonderfully happy occasion, and it is always good to see the Baptismal pool open.

In September Roger was welcomed into membership having started attending recently and being moved to join us.

Benjamin and Nelli were both welcomed into membership in November. Benjamin had previously been in membership with us, and they both transferred in from their previous church in Oxford.

In March we voted to recommend Helen Alderton's call to Ministry. This was confirmed by Bristol Baptist College and at the end of the Summer we said farewell to Helen and Simon as she went to Stonehouse Baptist Church to continue her Ministerial Formation. In September a group of us attended her Induction service there. It was a joyful occasion. Helen and Simon continue to be in membership with us whilst Helen is still a student, and we pray for them as they work with the church at Stonehouse.

It was good to see the Camp Fire groups come to fruition in the Autumn, as members open their homes to join with others in a time of Bible study and prayer. Getting to know each other and offer support is a key element of these groups. We currently have groups meeting in the evenings on Thursday, Friday and Sunday, and a lunchtime group on Wednesday.

It was with sadness that we announced the death of Enid Rees on the last day of 2025. Enid had been a long-standing member of Salem and was the oldest of us all. She died peacefully and her funeral was held at Salem.

We are grateful for all those who help make Salem the vibrant community that it is. We are always pleased to welcome new folk into our midst and to share God's word with them.

I recommend this report to you, it gives a snapshot of life at Salem and we are pleased that you are part of it.

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**With every blessing**

**Helen L and the Diaconate team**

## **Governance**

Salem Baptist Church is governed by its Trustees/Deacons, who are responsible for ensuring the church operates legally, safely and in accordance with its charitable purposes. They oversee the spiritual and practical leadership of the church and report regularly to the Church Members' Meeting, where major decisions are made collectively.

The Trustees take seriously their responsibility for good stewardship, financial oversight, and the wellbeing of all who attend activities at Salem.

Safeguarding is of paramount importance. The church maintains an up-to-date safeguarding policy which is reviewed regularly and follows Baptist Union guidance. We are supported by the WEBNet safeguarding team for advice where needed. Two Designated Persons oversee safeguarding concerns, and relevant volunteers undertake DBS checks. Details of safeguarding contacts are displayed on our noticeboard and website.

The church holds appropriate Public Liability Insurance and carries out risk assessments for events and activities. Policies and procedures — including safeguarding, health and safety, and data protection — are reviewed regularly to ensure good practice.

**Helen L**

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## Ministry Assistant's Annual Report

Dear Salem, you sent Simon and I on our way to Stonehouse Baptist Church in September with so much love and blessing, and it has certainly been honoured and fulfilled by the Lord. As Minister in Training at Stonehouse Baptist Church, both the church and the town have welcomed us wholeheartedly into the community. I have had the opportunity to speak to people on a one to one basis, in small discipleship and bible study groups, as a whole church and even as a whole town.

One of the greatest opportunities that I have been afforded is to work closely with the other churches in the town. Stonehouse is very community minded, and a very welcoming and supportive community too. There are so many council initiated activities, and outreach activities that Churches Together in Stonehouse are involved in. One of the particular highlights for me was helping to plan the civic 'Christmas Carols on the Green', and having the opportunity to proclaim the gospel on the street in front of a big crowd and all the civic dignitaries.

The Churches in Stonehouse truly work together well, with members of some churches supporting the mission activities of other churches who lack volunteers, and Stonehouse Baptist Church partnered with a sister church based on the nearby housing estate to deliver a carol service with an alternative nativity, with the characters played by people from four different churches.

So I see Stonehouse as a place where there are so many opportunities to come alongside people, by being visible in the community (I hang out in the coffee bar of the local pub to work or meet with people), and by getting involved in the many different social groups and activities on offer. So Simon and I feel very much called to remain in Stonehouse, and to that end, Stonehouse Baptist Church are prayerfully discerning whether they feel able to call me as minister when I have finished my training this summer.

So thank you Salem, for all your years of prayer, support and encouragement. Thank you Andy, for all that you have taught me and the ways you have guided me. Please pray that God will continue to equip both Simon and myself to be his servants, wherever we find ourselves and know that we will always hold Salem in our hearts with love and thankfulness.

Helen and Simon Alderton

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## **Worship Team**

This year, the worship group has grown in confidence and in relationship with one another. Our primary focus has been, and continues to be, on worshipping God, and helping others do so. To this end, Linda has led us to meet earlier, share breakfast on a Sunday morning and just be together as a group, rehearsing under less time pressure. This has really helped us, though it is difficult to quantify how, it feels like a big change that has given us the freedom to explore ideas and be musicians together, and to enjoy some food together (thank you Jayne in particular!). This, along with having the songs during the week before the service means that we can think and practice better for the Sunday morning which has been a great boon

We have seen some improvements in the equipment, that has meant being better able to hear ourselves on stage which is a huge blessing. In addition, several people have stepped well outside their comfort zones to bring something different to the congregation. Tayo singing 'Shackles' during the testimony service, Chris getting to grips with the transients on his wonderful sounding new bass guitar and James using his loopers to perform a meditation during the remembrance service.

James and Chris also had the opportunity to play in different churches to learn from what they did, and were able to share the experiences with the group and develop from it. We were blessed with two guest musicians from outside the congregations joining us: Joy on the piano and Stu on the bass guitar, as well as occasional cameos from within the congregation. We hope with some Jam sessions in the coming months we might inspire some other folk to join us either for fun or on a Sunday.

### **James G**

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## Tech Desk and Youtube streaming

Throughout the year we've continued streaming most of our services on YouTube - this means that people who can't make it to the services in person have an option to join with us remotely. In the same way, we've been holding Church Meetings in a "hybrid" model, where we meet together and provide a zoom meeting link for people who need it - allowing us to hear more diverse voices from our family as we discuss what God is leading us to.

We've also continued to update our technology for use for the services, with a new mixer (which allows us to control all the different sound sources and combine them) and new PCs for projecting and streaming the services. Generally it takes two people to operate (one for the sound and one for the pictures) however it's nearly possible to do it with only one (though it gets very busy at the end of a song when everything has to change at once). This is only possible with a team of regular volunteers, and a few people who can "step-in" when required - but we're always keen to spread the load.

Using these technologies also allows us to support some of our friends in other ways, from amplifying the speakers and music in the room, to providing the loop system and using automated captions (which continue to improve in quality), and the ability to watch the service later in the week means people who are working on Sundays can catch up, or people who want to re-view parts of the service later. This supports part of our mission to Love one another, making our services more accessible and available.

**Chris M**

## Sunday Morning Refreshments

I would like to take this opportunity to say a very big thank you to Simon Alderton who stepped down last year from organising the sunday coffee rota and the ordering. Also a big thank you to Jenny and Krisztina who have now come off the rota. Joining our regulars of Ruth, Naomi, Pat, Mario, Georgina and Jayne we have now welcomed Alex, Sue, Tim, Linda, Josh and Lydia to our happy band of "baristas".

This means we are now blessed with six pairs and we also have offers to step in to help in an emergency.

We are very grateful to all our volunteers who are serving our Salem Community.

If anyone else would like to join the team please let me know.

**Duncan**

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## Lighthouse

Lighthouse started in 2025 as it was recognized there were lots of youth members looking to explore Christianity deeper. With 7 members, we have grown in numbers and faith since. We meet regularly on a Sunday evening in term time.

In April 2025, we did a bake sale and fundraised over £100 to buy paint for our group room, thanks to the generosity of the church. Over the course of the summer, we painted our wonderful lighthouse mural, designed by Josh, and rearranged our room to a more suitable style. Every week, we gather, play games, drink hot chocolate, and discuss what it's like to be a young Christian today.

Some of our highlights have been: watching the Truman Show, playing the Traitors game and Herd Mentality, Andy's K-pop demon Hunters message analogy, and creating our own version of dodgeball.

Now in 2026, we have had 4 new people come along, with two new regulars. We have grown in friendship, faith, and have had lots of fun.

In the future, we hope to create a lighthouse choir, attend a Christian camp together, have a lighthouse sleepover, lead a service together.

**Rebekah, Ruth, Angela, and the lighthouse crew.**

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## Junior Church Report

Junior Church meets most weeks in the back hall where we enjoy a range of teaching, crafts and games. This is a key area of Salem's work, to help the children learn to love God, love one another and love God's world, through a greater understanding of the Bible; how God helps them in all aspects of their lives; and how they can be a Christian in today's world.

We are grateful that the additional adult helper rota has been established, as this enables us to continue the work with just a small number of staff. We are thankful to Georgina, Heloise, Diane and Helen who work on a rota basis to teach the children. We hope that the additional adult from within Salem also enjoys their time with the children.

We have a lovely group of children, from 4 – 16 who have learned to work together and support each other in their learning. They certainly have fun together!

We worked through lessons from a series of books written by Lois Keffer – All in One Sunday School. They are ideal as they take the children through the Bible, looking at stories and characters, linking the ideas to life today so keeping them relevant. They supply a series of games and crafts with each lesson, so support the staff in their planning and preparation.

We are grateful to the Bennington Hall Trust Fund who have granted funding for us to buy these books.

Over the Summer the leaders took a break and the children organised themselves with colouring and quiz sheets at the back of the sanctuary. We used a series of 'I am . . .' statements about Jesus to link the theme together.

Christmas was the usual busy time. We had planned to use *Away in a Suitcase* by Fay Rowland as it had many parts and so would suit our growing number of children. However, at the start of December numbers dropped so rehearsing became a real juggling act. We shouldn't be surprised as this is often the case but after a few stressful sessions with adults standing in for numerous parts, the children turned up on the day, and it went well.

Thankfully no one expects Oscar winning perfection and the story was delivered in the usual fun way.

Thanks must also be expressed to the Creche helpers who go out faithfully with the youngest children and keep them entertained throughout the session.

### The Junior Church Team

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## Tots@Salem

This year has seen a lot of changes at Tots, with new faces joining and old faces leaving us, with the biggest of these losses being that of Helen Alderton, who stepped down from leading the group at the end of the summer term. Her very large shoes have been amply filled since by Andy, who has given the group a new kind of energy and we have seen it grow from strength to strength over the Autumn and Winter.

Whilst there was a small drop off in numbers as we got close to summer, with a real concern for the future, once the weather started getting cold and wet, numbers grew again, from lows of below 10 up to 20+ children (not including their grownups in that number). We have started to see this translate into engagement in the church in other ways, through banger night and crib and parade services and also having seen some attend a normal Sunday morning service.

We are never pushy with a gospel message, but are always open to talk about our faith and the life of the church in normal conversation, we have several "Sunday School" songs that we rotate in with the nursery rhymes as we sing and have a teapot for prayer requests that gets checked and prayed for every week.

Our aim each week is that every adult is able to leave having had a meaningful conversation with someone. It has been great to see relationships blossom and grow to the point that it isn't us helpers that they are necessarily having that conversation with, but that they consider themselves a part of the church community and are building those relationships together.

There are hours of hard work that go into each session of Tots, from set up the day before, preparing snacks and crafts, choosing stories, buying supplies of play-dough, rice and pasta, to the set down which is normally done in a mad 30 minutes from about 11:15 to 11:45, we couldn't do it without the help of all our regular volunteers, so we would like to extend a big thanks to everyone involved.

**Chris C**

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## Uniformed Organisations

We continue to support units of Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides in the church, with the parade services in February, July and November as popular as ever.

### Rainbow Report 2025



2025 was a milestone year celebrating 40 years of Guiding at Salem.

Rainbows continues to thrive with a unit of girls aged 4-7 years.

This year the Rainbows have been very busy working on their badges, some of the favourites being: Storyteller, family tree, nature, drawing (we had some amazing photos of some of our Rainbows creating their large drawing on the beach whilst on holiday), animal lover and fruit and veg to name just a few.

As a unit we have also gained some theme awards such as Be Well, Take action and Know Myself. In April we all gained our First Aid. We had a lot of fun bandaging and putting each other in the recovery position. Even the smallest Rainbow was able to put a leader into the recovery position by the end of the meeting! During the year we have tried our hand at being astronauts, creating comfortable nests using a variety of materials, fairground games, bob sleighing and swim safety all in the hall!

In July we visited our outdoor activity centre at Cowley and tried our hand at arrows and soft tomahawks (archery and axe throwing for Rainbows) which the girls loved. It was the hottest day of the year and they coped well with the heat unlike the leaders!

We have had promise ceremonies and presented bronze, silver and gold awards and flown Rainbows up to Brownies.

We have joined in church parades, singing in the November shoe box service and in December we put on our Christmas hats and crossed the road to sing Christmas songs and carols to the residents, staff and visitors at Sandfields Nursing Home where we were made very welcome and it was lovely when people joined in the singing with us.

Thank you to the team of leaders and young leaders who give their time and talents to enable Rainbows to run and to the church for their continued support and prayers. Without all of this support we could not offer the Rainbows the varied programme that we do, so a huge thank you to everyone.

**Sally F**

## **Brownies Report 2025**

The unit is very nearly at our maximum capacity – as with last year, some of our oldest Brownies will need to stay with us a little longer while we wait for the Guide unit to have a little more capacity.

The leadership team remains the same – Rachel, Fiona and Jean, and we still have access to both Ann and Lesley when we're short of Guiders. Ann has also continued to maintain our unit accounts – support which is very much appreciated. Her continued support and advice are very much appreciated as I pick up the running of the unit.

One of our young leaders - Béa - left us in December to focus on her schoolwork, but Lexie remains with us and we very much value her support – especially with the girls who need some additional / one to one help.

We have also been lucky enough to have my son Daniel with us since Christmas while he completes the service Element of his DofE Bronze award.

The year has been busy and we have covered a wide range of activities from arts and crafts to challenge badges and outside adventures.

All the girls earned their Innovate stage 3 skills builder over the spring term and also took part in Girlguiding Gloucestershire's Internet safety challenge – learning how to stay safe online and earning a badge in the process. We had a fun Easter craft night too.

We took the girls away to Cowley Adventure for Brownie Holiday in May – the theme was Wicked which meant an awful lot of green and pink themed crafts!! The girls gained their Aviation interest badge ('defying gravity'), as well as their Land adventure badge. Brownie Holiday only happens with a lot of planning and a tremendous team effort. My thanks go to Eagle Owl for the amazing food throughout our stay and to Barn Owl for being our first-aider, campfire expert and for supporting the older Brownies with their Camp Stage 2 Skills Builder. We also had help through the weekend from Brown Owl (Ann) who visited us on Saturday to share some her delicious Chocolate Crunch and run an excellent Wide Game (treasure hunt) for us all – and Karen McFarlane who joined us on Sunday to run some Bushcraft and campfire cooking. The girls were thrilled with their Dampers (campfire-baked bread with a jam filling) and are still talking about them now!

We spent an enjoyable evening back up at Cowley Adventure later in the summer term working on our Explore stage 2 skills builder and having a go at tunnelling. We also spent evenings working on the Lions at Large challenge, which we completed through June and July – just sneaking a walk through the town to find follow the Lions at Large trail before we broke up for the summer.

In the autumn the Brownies took part in Parliament week and learned about how voting works, we invited a Peer Educator in to run a session about mental wellbeing called 'think Resilient', and we spent time collecting for and filling Shoe boxes ready for parade service in November. We are always so lucky with donations and this year should thank Sally's

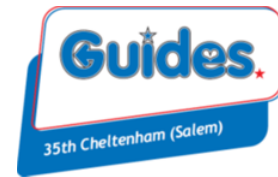
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neighbour who once again donated a giant bag of hand-knitted toys for us to add to the boxes.

As ever we would like to thank all those from the Church community who support the unit, particularly those who have provided financial support to those who have needed it.

**Rachel M (Snowy Owl)**

## **Guides Report 2025**



In 2025 we said goodbye to two of our oldest guides and welcomed four new guides up from Brownies. Our leadership team also grew with Karen Master joining us as a leader in training and Helen Ledger as an occasional unit helper. We have temporarily lost our other leader, leesha, as she continues further education at university, though attending meetings when she is home. This brings our total number of guides up to 25 with two young leaders helping us and there is currently a waiting list.

The spring term saw guides challenge themselves with activities based on our theme Know Myself. We played games pretending to be penguins and took on roles directing and acting scenarios based on the Guide Law. We completed Region's All for One based learning all about diversity and inclusion.

Outside of our meetings we held a quiz night, fundraising to support a guide going away on international opportunities – with the Church leadership team winning! Guides turned detectives during our 'who dunnit' themed sleepover at Deer Park, investigating the crime scene and questioning suspects.

Summer term brought lighter nights where we had several meetings away from the hall, playing Rugby in Pittville Park and Archery and Golf Frisbee at Deer Park. Our newer guides also learnt how to pitch a tent in preparation for our upcoming camp.

Some of our guides took part in Bubbs Hill Bash in June, a day completing various tasks to earn points before joining together at the end for a campfire singing songs and finding out the results. One of our Salem teams fended off over 50 other team to place second.

We were joined by guides from St. Nicolas unit for a Harry Potter themed summer camp. Girls flew on their broomstick (on the zipwire) and got up close with birds and animals from Hogwarts. Wye Valley Falconry visited bringing several owls with girls were able to hold. Roaming Reptiles also visited allowing girls to hold or touch snakes, tarantulas, a bearded dragon, blue-tongued skink and a giant tortoise – not for the faint hearted! We rounded the camp off with an outdoor cinema before watching the stars as girls snuggled down into their survival bags and slept.

In autumn, the guides worked hard towards their Be Well theme, working on various first aid activities. We celebrated the international day of the girl with 'I can do anything' challenge badge, marked parliament week with a debate on various topics including social media being banned to under 18s and whether schools should be segregated.

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We also held our pudding evening, raising money to support guides in their upcoming international opportunities and collected and filled shoeboxes for Eastern Europe as part of the Teams4U appeal.

Salem Guides have had a very busy year with 19 interest badges being given out. We also presented a bronze award to Esther and silver awards to Pranusha, Emily and Esther. Three guides went on international adventures this year; Evie and Layla went to Belgium as part of Southwest England Girlguiding's International Community Experience (ICE) where they helped clean war graves and took part in the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gates. Our other Guide, Darcy, travelled with the county to Norway, sightseeing and taking part in adventurous activities. Not forgetting Erica who went to India with Girlguiding Southwest England's Inspire (18-30) experiencing working with local communities before a whistle stop tour of the golden triangle.

We thank God for the safe, nurturing environment we, at Salem, are able to provide these teenagers and young women as they grow into maturity. We want to thank all among our Church Fellowship, who have supported us through prayer during the year

**Karen, Unit Administrator and Erica (Guide Leader)**

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## **The Hub Annual Report**

The Hub has been going from strength to strength this year, with Sunday and Tuesday regular visitors, we were even pleased to have a visit from the YMCA, with a wonderful talk from him. At the end of the year when it got colder, we put to the vote if they would be interested in bacon rolls and cup of soup, and the ayes had it, so every second Tuesday of the month we do bacon and soup, anyone who wants to come along on those Tuesday's, please let Sue know at church or Hub the Tuesday before that.

**Sue**

## **Come and Join Us**

Come and Join Us is a group of around twenty Salem friends that meets for a midweek lunch in different venues approximately five times per year. These are happy occasions when we celebrate our wonderful God's huge blessing of Christian fellowship and the joy of sharing food and fun together.

In 2025 we held our gatherings at Norton Garden Centre in March, The Shalom Cafe in Bourton-on-the-Water in May, The Ark in Newent in July, Highfields Garden Centre in September, and Simpson's Fish and Chips Cafe in November.

These events are open to and enjoyed by Salem friends of all ages. We hope you will Come and Join Us for more adventures in 2026.

**Helen L & Myra**

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## **Campfire Groups**

2025 saw the re-introduction of house groups, or Campfire Groups as they became known. There are currently four groups meeting regularly, with an aim to add more groups if there is further need.

### **Sunday Evening Campfire Group**

The Sunday Evening Campfire Small Group meets most weeks at church where we enjoy a mix of Bible study, chat and prayer. There are about 7 of us who meet regularly and share what is going on in our lives and seek to learn more about God. We have fun and feel supported and encouraged by the members of the group.

Small groups are a key part of Salem, as they help us to learn to love God, love one another and love God's world. We have deepened our understanding of the Bible, how God helps us in our daily lives and how we can be a Christian in today's world.

One highlight is when Chris Cooper led us in a great session where we got to know each other better by each sharing about our 4 'H's: History, Heroes, Heartbreak and Hope. It was a lovely way to find out about each person and establish deeper relationships.

Recently, Chris M led us through a study on the book of Amos. This was really helpful, as the questions enabled us to reflect on God's message about justice, true worship, and compassion for the vulnerable. We thought about what it meant for Israel, Judah and the surrounding nations and what it means for us today. We even had a weekly homework challenge, e.g. ask a non-Christian friend what the best thing is that they have seen the church do.

Our plan for the future is to study the book of Mark and we look forward to digging into this together.

We are grateful to Chris Cooper for running the group and for those who have brought along cake and sweet treats!

### **The Sunday Evening Campfire Group**

### **Wednesday Mid-day Campfire Group**

Wednesday Mid-day Campfire Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. There are 8 in the group with an average age of 77 years. We enjoy delicious homemade soup and a roll provided by our host then have 1.5 hours going through the Bible Society course. We are taking it slowly to enable time for someone to share their testimony at the beginning, watch the video, discuss and pray together at the end. It's helping us all get to know one another and giving us a helpful overview of the bible.

### **The Wednesday Mid-day Campfire Group**

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## **Bishop's Cleeve Campfire Group**

This group is hosted by Jeanette and led by Heather fortnightly on Friday evenings. We had our first meeting in October, and, after an introductory evening, we studied the four themes of Advent - Hope, Peace, Joy, Love - with material from the Bible Project. We watch a short video as part of our discussions and conclude with prayers. Over the autumn, we grew from an initial 5 people and we now have 9 in our group. There is always room for more, and anyone wishing to join us should contact Jeanette or Heather.

Heather

## **Thursday Night Campfire Group**

We meet at 45 Stanway Road fortnightly on Thursdays. Membership has been 4 most weeks, but small numbers have helped us have some deeper conversations and for everyone to feel comfortable contributing.

Key aims for the groups are to grow deep in relationship with each other, encounter God together, and to support each other as we aim to apply the bible to our lives.

As a way to help us share openly and learn more about God, we are going through a resource called Discipleship Explored. We watch a video exploring Paul's letter to the Philippians and hearing from Christians around the world about their faith.

We recently welcomed a new member and would be very keen to welcome any others who want to join a group

**Nellie**

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## Christian Aid

Christian Aid celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Since the end of the Second World War it has given practical support to disadvantaged people wherever they are, throughout the world.

The main fund-raising event in Cheltenham was Christian Aid Week in May – the theme for the week was Christian Aid's work in Guatemala, where farmers have been badly affected by global warming. Volunteers from Salem distributed envelopes to houses in the Gloucester Road area. A total of £5,954 was raised within Cheltenham, excluding many online donations which were paid directly to Christian Aid.

At the end of the year, a group from Salem raised money by singing carols at the local Waitrose supermarket. This year the total raised by all the church groups singing carols was £1,112; the money was donated to Christian Aid's Christmas appeal, in support of people in the east of DRC Congo, an area which for a long time has suffered from violent conflict. In addition exactly £100 was raised at Salem from donations in place of Easter and Christmas cards. Another local fundraising event was an autumn fair, held at St Andrew's URC (due to be held at Salem in 2026), which raised £1,246. Thank you to everyone who supported all these events during the year.

### Andrew and Jean

## Salem Ramblers

We continue to enjoy walks in the local countryside. It is a good opportunity to come alongside each other and get to know each other better, whilst enjoying God's beautiful world.

We usually walk on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month and share the planning of the routes. After the walk we go to a member's house to enjoy refreshments together.

In January we walked on Leckhampton Hill. This is always a winner, as it's not too far to travel and the views are wonderful. We can look all across the town from up there.

The intention in February was to walk around the lanes in Prestbury, but it was just too wet.

March, April and May saw us on 3 new routes. The first was on Cleeve Hill, taking a different route along the escarpment, below the hill and eventually walking to the top and back across the golf course. In April, Fred led us on a new route in Frampton. We started on fields and paths around the Frampton Estate and then finished along the riverbank. In May we were out in Gotherington across fields. We were entertained by the Steam Train passing by as it was a heritage weekend on the railway, and also a WW2 plane practising loops above us.

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The next 4 months were the most unusual on record. In 2 it was far too hot to walk, and the next 2 were missed through a combination of heat and low numbers. On some occasions we still met together for refreshments, always happy to share tea and cake!

In October we managed the walk along the riverbank at Eckington, which had been thwarted last September. It is always enjoyable to walk near water.

We finished the year in the usual style, with the walk being cancelled due to wet weather. We are hoping for more regular outings in 2026!

We are a social walking group, enjoying each other's company and the lovely area we live in. We are always looking for new routes and members, so feel free to join us.

**Helen L**

## **Community involvement**

Just like in previous years, in 2025 we continued to focus on making missionary disciples of Jesus through different community events: weekly tots (activities for young children and their caregiver), visits to a local care home, a summer barbecue, a Christmas meal, and singing carols around the fire (this time indoors). We also kept supporting our local food pantry and CAP (Christians Against Poverty) for debt help, and Salem remained a location where people could drop off shoebox donations for Teams4U (contributing 387 boxes from the total number of about 60,000 across the country).

**Krisztina**

## **Mission Partners**

The church continues to support four mission partners in Zambia, Albania, Malawi and Thailand each seeking to provide training, teaching and development skills amongst disadvantaged communities. In 2025 we had two partners visit and update us of their work in Thailand and Albania.

**Naomi**

## Finance Report 2025

	2024	2025
<b>Income</b>		
cash	642.34	969.85
card/ env	477.09	260.86
s/o	44,829.89	58,264.20
charity cheques	800.00	2,800.00
rent	5,767.50	4,915.00
tax	9,942.77	10,938.18
interest	2,045.98	703.99
one off	8,056.53	32,832.24
Meals		1,159.47
Clean dons	420.00	340.00
Tots Dons	541.82	418.71
Community Fund	764.28	12,846.46
Min Assist Gift		695.00
	74,288.20	127,143.96
<b>Expenditure (Ministry)</b>		
Minister	-39,211.21	-38,123.49
Min Assist Gift		-695.00
CMD	-30.00	-28.35
Pastoral/Gifts/Cmtty Fund	-508.09	-13,553.39
Gathered Worship	-1,263.37	-740.99
Youth & Childrens	-249.31	-912.40
Tots	-474.16	-322.59
Social	-655.53	-919.76
Meals		-761.62
Pulpit supply	-841.59	-358.58
	-43,233.26	-56,416.17
<b>Expenditure (Mission)</b>		
Donations	-6,345.85	-7,136.00
Loc Mission/ Outreach	-1,013.13	-706.13
Seed fund	0.00	0.00
	-7,358.98	-7,842.13

<b>Expenditure (Maintenance)</b>			
Ch Fabric		-1,815.15	-1,332.28
Manse Fabric		-241.93	-34,987.12
Admin/Office/Subs		-1,198.38	-924.84
Ch Utilities		-12,752.57	-14,620.73
Mn Utilities		-4,619.14	-5,050.25
Cleaning		-1,350.48	-1,754.15
		-21,977.65	-58,669.37
<b>Surplus / Deficit for year</b>		<b>1,718.31</b>	<b>4,216.29</b>
	CAF Bank	£3,255.64	£33,818.29
	reserves	£49,035.87	£22,689.51
Balance at bank	<b>Total</b>	<b>£52,291.51</b>	<b>£56,507.80</b>
<b>Salem Baptist Church</b>			
<b>Balance sheet as at 21 December 2025</b>			
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Property and Fixtures		£1,066,668.00	£1,066,668.00
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash on deposit		£49,035.87	£22,689.51
Cash at bank		£3,255.64	£33,818.29
Cash in hand		£1.00	£1.00
		£52,292.51	£56,508.80
<b>Total</b>		<b>£1,118,960.51</b>	<b>£1,123,176.80</b>
Audited by Chris Cooper and Fiona Major 2nd March 2026			

**Paul Masters**

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**Salem Baptist Church is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Salem is affiliated to the West of England Baptist Network and to the Cheltenham Cluster of Baptist Churches. Salem is also a member of an ecumenical grouping of Churches in Cheltenham.**