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Your Majesty,

On 8th May you joined us at the Service of Thanksgiving to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. On the back of the order of service, we printed a poem, *In Retrospect*, by the Poet Laureate. It began ‘The world asks a great deal of poppies’. Simon Armitage reminded us that poppies ‘carry the wounds of war and shoulder the weight of remembrance’.

The witness of the Unknown Warrior, a nameless victim of carnage, is a steady reminder that we tell a difficult story and that there are limits to what we know. It is our job to try to tell the truth about the best and worst of us.

It has been a year when remembrance has certainly loomed large, and not just on the anniversary of VE day and later for VJ day. Your Majesty was with us again to mark the tercentenary of the creation of the Order of the Bath.

We build on old foundations and we take the past seriously. The King Charles III Sacristy project, resting precisely on the foundations of the original Sacristy, advances rapidly. We were honoured to welcome Her Majesty to dedicate the foundation stone. Now we look forward to seeing the work completed and the transformed visitor experience, which will provide those who come here with the opportunity to see more of the Abbey.

As well as hosting distinguished visitors including the Emir of Qatar and the President of France, we have once again welcomed well over a million visitors. We have cared for them (the languages on our multimedia guide now include Ukrainian) and continued to protect the fabric of the building for the generations to come. Our staff and volunteers continue to rise to the challenges of interpreting our past and planning for the future, whilst tirelessly living in the moment in generous welcome.

The strength of our visitor numbers is creating the opportunity confidently to fund our priorities (especially the Digital Abbey), create the resources needed for a major restoration programme over the coming years and invest with real impact in partnerships locally, nationally and internationally in line with our mission to proclaim the Gospel through a commitment to social justice. A particular example of this is the new partnership with the Cardinal Hume Centre, through which the Abbey will make a donation of £600,000 over three years to reduce family homelessness in Westminster. This builds on a similar partnership with The Passage.

Our digital presence grows, with a global community now benefitting from two streamed services a week from the Abbey. Our music gives glory to God, and we still uncover surprises and share the riches of our historic collections with many around the country and world. In the last year we have discovered that one of our fabric bags, used to protect the seal on an ancient document, can be matched to the cloth used at the re-burial of Charlemagne. We also loaned a rare 1588 first edition of a Welsh Bible to St David’s Cathedral.

We have been joined by new colleagues bringing new skills, amongst them a new Head of IT and a new Minor Canon. It was a very particular joy to launch a new scheme which brings a Commonwealth Theologian here for three months. Dr Ishaya Anthony quickly became a valued member of our community and also a wonderful witness to conversations that cross so many boundaries and bind us better together. We said farewell to Canon Anthony Ball as he left to take up the significant task of heading up the Anglican Centre in Rome.

Here you will find a report and accounts in a slightly revised format. We have included three case studies as we strive to offer a more focussed review of what has been important in the last year. So, you will find within the report a description of our work on the Digital Abbey programme, an account of the Westminster Abbey Institute’s Congress at Jesus College, Cambridge, and information on the building of The King Charles III Sacristy.

Of course, in all this activity, worship and praise remain our fundamental calling. It is our privilege to serve God and our Sovereign in this remarkable church at the heart of the nation. It is our calling to remember faithfully and to hope for the kingdom that is to come.



The Dean of Westminster
The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle

Mission and Strategic Priorities of the Abbey

The Abbey’s priorities continue to be focused on the five key elements of the Abbey’s mission

The Abbey’s priorities continue to be focused on the five key elements of the Abbey’s mission, which are:

- To offer daily divine Worship to Almighty God and resource the Church in this vocation;
- To serve the Sovereign;
- To proclaim the Gospel to the nation and Commonwealth, celebrating the distinctive witness of the Christian faith and engaging with public life;
- To provide a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment for all who come to the Abbey;
- To care for the precious resources entrusted to us: our people, buildings, heritage and money.

The Abbey’s strategic objectives up to 2030 are then expressed as follows, under the five elements set out above.

On worship, the Abbey will:

- Continue daily worship as a primary focus.
- Strengthen its mission through a rich and accessible digital presence reaching a substantial international community of users.
- Remain a centre of excellence in liturgy, music and preaching, expressing and interpreting the Anglican tradition and offering the wider church a thoughtful and generous resource to sustain the next generation of priests and musicians.
- Sustain and develop the exceptional quality of its Music Foundation and Choir School, offering excellent opportunities for the most talented boys, girls and adult musicians and seeking to establish a substantial music endowment to contribute to the funding of this in the future.

In serving the Sovereign, the Abbey will:

- Serve The King by building on its central role in his Coronation and contributing with integrity to his priorities and passions.
- Nurture fruitful and trusting relationships with the Royal Households, ensuring that it is seen as a reliable and relevant partner in their developing work.
- Fulfil its role as a church at the heart of the nation through constant readiness to deliver major State events with excellence.

In proclaiming the Gospel, the Abbey will:

- Bear witness to the Gospel through the celebration of the liturgy and in its teaching and engagement with local, national and international communities.
- Act as a convening centre of faith-based dialogue, reconnection and hope for the nation, the Commonwealth and the world.
- Focus on engagement with contested issues, including those of social justice, sustainability and narratives of culture and identity.
- Support parliamentarians and public servants in undertaking their roles with confidence and integrity by providing a valued, relevant, insightful and safe space for exploration of challenging topics.

The welcome offered by the Abbey will:

- Provide visitors with an inspiring introduction to the beauty and wonder of our liturgy, music, history, art and architecture. It will be rooted in the Gospel, and seek to present something of the transformative riches of the Christian Faith to our visitors.
- Be open and inclusive, in person and online, offering a stimulating experience and rich interpretation of all aspects of our heritage, underpinned by excellent facilities.
- Be safe, especially for those who are vulnerable.
- Extend a welcome to young people, children and local communities, alongside other visitors.
- Generate income from visitors and make judicious use of appropriate commercial opportunities. This will provide sufficient resources to sustain and develop the Abbey's mission, with numbers of people and scale of activities carefully managed to be sustainable and complementary to other elements of the Abbey's life.

In terms of responsible stewardship, the Abbey will:

- Deliver on its commitment to achieve net zero in the longer term by undertaking a substantial programme of investment and activities to reduce its environmental footprint and achieve greater sustainability in all relevant aspects of its activities.
- Make significant progress in addressing its long-term programme of planned high-priority restoration, particularly relating to the Cloisters.
- Provide strong and relevant interpretation of its Collections, increasing digital access and seeking lively collaboration with selected partners.
- Present its memorials with clarity, sensitivity and integrity and make progress towards addressing imbalances.
- Develop high levels of staff engagement, fulfilment and efficiency and take action to improve staff and volunteer diversity to reflect our central role in the life of the nation and Commonwealth.
- Operate through effective governance, with clear accountability and timely, high-quality decision-making.
- Seek to diversify its sources of income, maintain unrestricted risk reserves at a level to ensure resilience to major external shocks, and work towards long-term funds for risk and exceptional fabric restoration requirements of at least £50 million.

Offering Divine Worship and Serving The King

The aim of the Digital Abbey
programme is to build lasting
engagement with a diverse
online global community

At the heart of the Abbey’s mission remains the worship of Almighty God. Each week, 29 services are held, alongside a number of special occasions that bring together members of the Royal Family, major national and international organisations, representatives of other denominations and faiths, and the wider community. This shared participation continues to be a distinctive expression of the Abbey’s service to the nation and the Commonwealth. A full list of special services held during the year is provided on pages 116 - 119.

Over the past year, the Abbey has welcomed 235,019 worshippers from around the world to its regular statutory services, held four times each day and five times on Sundays. In addition, a further 45,409 people joined us for other significant services during the year to 29th September 2025, each contributing to the Abbey’s life of worship and community.

In October, the Abbey saw more than 1,050 pilgrims come together for the Edwardtide commemorations, celebrating the life and legacy of St Edward, King and Confessor, whose shrine lies at the core of the Abbey. The Right Reverend Dr Andrew Rumsey, Bishop of Ramsbury, preached at the Festival Eucharist, while a programme of prayer and devotional activities for all ages offered pilgrims opportunities for reflection and renewed spiritual engagement within the Abbey’s life of worship. This year has seen a deepening of our theological relationship with the Commonwealth. In January, we welcomed the Revd Dr Ishaya Anthony as our inaugural Commonwealth Theologian in Residence, now an annual Lent Term appointment.

The Charles Gore Lecture was given by theologian Professor Sathi Clarke, Bishop Sundo Kim Chair in World Christianity and Professor of Theology, Culture and Mission at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington D.C., on the theme ‘Theology for Commonwealth: God’s Dreaming, Common Worth, Planetary Communion.’ A preparatory seminar featured Westminster Abbey’s Public Historian Dr Renie Chow Choy, the Revd Dr Ishaya Anthony, and the Revd Dr Peniel Rajkumar, Global Theologian and director of Global Mission, USPG, exploring memory, identity, and hope in the life of the Commonwealth, chaired by the Canon Theologian.

Broadcaster and author Rhidian Brook delivered the Eric Abbott Memorial Lecture on ‘Writing in Good Faith: A Pilgrimage in Fiction, Film and Thought.’ Online Koinonia seminars featured The Revd Dr Jesse Zink (Montreal), Dr Nadia Marais (Stellenbosch University, South Africa), and Dr Mark Vernon (Oxford).

The Friends of the Anglican Centre in Rome Annual Lecture was delivered by Ambassador Chris Trott, HM Ambassador to the Holy See. The 170th anniversary lecture of Embrace the Middle East was given jointly by Archbishop Angaelos and the Very Revd John Witcombe. The 21st anniversary of the Anglican/ Methodist Covenant was marked with Evensong and a reception in November.

Proclaiming the Gospel to the Nation and Commonwealth

Welcoming all, inspiring wonder and revealing the stories of the Abbey

The Westminster Abbey Institute seeks to nurture and revitalise moral and spiritual values of public life and service under the banner of *Renewing Faith in Public Life*. At the end of 2024, in pursuit of an ambitious growth strategy endorsed by the Abbey’s Board, the Institute expanded its team and reshaped its work around three priorities: public programmes, engagement with Parliament and institutions, and fellowship. Across each area, the Institute’s reach and impact continue to grow.

In September 2025, the autumn series *Remembering War, Rethinking the Tasks of Peace* began with a private retreat day for military chaplains, marked by a gracious letter of gratitude and encouragement from Her Majesty the Queen. The first public event, *Idealism and Compromise: The Search for an Ethical Peace*, brought together 225 guests for a deeply reflective discussion chaired by Rageh Omaar, with contributions from The Baroness Ashton of Upholland, The Lord Williams of Oystermouth and General Sir Nick Carter.

Seventeen Fellows graduated in July from the Institute’s annual Fellows’ Programme, which supports emerging senior leaders to attend to the moral muscles required for public service leadership in a changing and demanding world. Closer to home, the Institute welcomed 21 groups on its new public-service tour, *A Thousand Years of Faith in Public Life*. The tour is offered on a private, small-group basis to Members of Parliament and the leaders of government departments and other public service organisations.

In the second year of its five-year strategy, the Learning Department continued to deliver their aims of *welcoming all, inspiring wonder and revealing the stories of the Abbey* to formal learners. Nearly 21,000 students and teachers visited this year, with over 12,000 taking a guided tour with a member of the staff team of six or one of the 40 volunteers. Almost a third of students were able to visit free of charge through the Abbey’s bursary scheme, which supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Year two of the programme to deepen links with schools around the Commonwealth has seen virtual classroom sessions delivered to schools in Canada, Australia and Malta, while visiting schools from Commonwealth countries were welcomed with guided tours. Across the year, 301 students and adults took part, with participation growing steadily as the programme matures.

The department has introduced a range of new resources and programmes to make the Abbey more accessible to students with special educational needs and disabilities. These include sensory bags for learners in mainstream schools, guided tours incorporating Makaton signing, and collaborative initiatives with colleagues across the Abbey to engage students with profound and multiple disabilities from local special schools.

Providing a Safe and Inspiring Welcome

We are developing visitor management plans for a new entrance and revised visitor route to reap the full benefits of the King Charles III Sacristy when it opens in early 2027

The Abbey welcomed 1,331,050 visitors this financial year, a testament to its continuing appeal as a place of history, worship, and discovery. While this represents a 6.4% decrease from the record numbers seen in the previous year, this also reflects the conscious steps we have taken to manage capacity responsibly during peak periods, thereby improving the experience of visitors at those times.

The majority of visitors booked their tickets online, either directly through the Abbey or via third-party agencies, with 74% choosing this convenient option. Most of these bookings were for timed entry, helping us manage visitor numbers efficiently so that every visitor can fully appreciate the beauty and history of the Abbey. Building on this, we are developing visitor management plans for a new entrance and revised visitor route to reap the full benefits of the King Charles III Sacristy when it opens in early 2027.

Throughout the year, we have collaborated closely with our IT colleagues to transfer the majority of group bookings to an online, timed-entry portal, scheduled to go live in early October. By the time the King Charles III Sacristy opens, we anticipate that over 85% of visitors will arrive with pre-booked timed-entry tickets, providing a smoother and more enjoyable experience for everyone.

During the year the Events team welcomed over 5,000 corporate guests, who attended over 60 events. Guests came from a number of different sectors, from registered charities to asset management organisations. The Passage, with whom the Abbey works very closely, returned for a reception in College Garden with 700 guests. One of the outstanding highlights of the year was a reception in College Garden for 800 guests in May following the service to mark the 300th Anniversary of the founding of the Order of the Bath. The Abbey continues to work with Benugo as its public catering partner.

