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Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2023-4

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Secretary's Introduction

This review has been compiled for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and reflects the sense of community and passion with which we at St Mary's have spent the year worshipping, learning, sharing our faith, caring for each other, looking after our buildings and relaxing together.

My grateful thanks go to everyone who has sent in a report: I do enjoy reading all the responses. We are so grateful for all our helpers.

We are really hoping to recruit more helpers, so please consider whether you could have a place volunteering in one or more of our groups. You can contact group leaders individually or through our office.

Anna Martin PCC Secretary

Stmaryssaffronwaldenpcc@gmail.com 07562 506867

St James' Church, Swards End

Whilst it was quite a busy and successful year for St James it was mostly more of the same – not that that is a problem. Perhaps a blessing.

Our congregation numbers have held up well and include a couple or so of new members or who have become more frequent which is especially good to see. The Youth Club continues to thrive and we remain grateful to Matt and all the supporting volunteers that enable this to take place. A couple of Club members were seen at a Christmas service which is especially pleasing. Coffee mornings continue to be well supported and we know those that attend find them very sociable. Chris and Annie Bishop organised a Quiz Night in St Marys which was a lot of fun, demonstrating that winning is not

the main objective ! Again thanks to those who organise all these social gatherings and activities. For a small Church we do quite a lot which would not be possible without full support which we are lucky enough to have in spades.

A number of highlights need to be specifically mentioned. In particular 2023 marked Chris Bishop's Golden Anniversary of being a clergyman. A really memorable service was held in St Mary's with suitable refreshments and celebrations taking place. It was an opportunity for us at St James to reflect as to how lucky we are to have Chris looking after us. We should not wait another 50 years to have such a party!

Another highlight was the King's Coronation. Our related Service was well attended and a little bit different to reflect the occasion. How strange it was to sing "God save our gracious King" for the first time in St James. Teas and cakes were served up in a beautifully decorated and flower strewn church. A huge thanks to all that put their shoulder to the wheel and who could forget the fabulous flower arrangement put together by Karen Cannon.

There was quite a lot of work done on the Fabric side of St James during the year. The major work was the eradication of wood worm in the church itself. This involved the removal of pews and the spraying of the entire building and the replacement of a number of rotten floorboards. This was carried out successfully by specialist contractors but thanks are due to Trevor Start and his talented assistant Mick Powell for all the prior necessary preparatory work and whatever is the opposite of preparatory work thereafter !! We had a leak in the loo which Trevor was able to fix and the issues surrounding this meant that the water authority fitted a new stopcock in the path outside which means we can isolate the supply if we need to in the future.

Ongoing maintenance and minor repairs remain a regular feature both inside and outside the church as well as in the garden but we are optimistic that we will avoid any further immediate major expenditure, although some roofing work will most likely be the next substantial item. We also need to redecorate the interior wall behind the organ and the other side of the wall in the hall. We hope stain block and emulsion will do the trick.

Exactly as we said last year, the church garden is ticking over and the new beech hedge on the east side remains healthy and is growing and thickening out. We do have a little help from Kelvin, our gardener and have a rota for watering and light work. The two benches in the garden have taken on a new lease of life having been spruced up a bit. We have previously stripped back a lot of vegetation behind our northern boundary but do need to keep an eye on it very soon before it gets out of hand again. The neighbours are very helpful and supportive, but that area is out of sight for both of us and the excessive growth creeps up on us very quickly. Despite the work, our garden is nice to have.

Our Services continued to be provided by Chris Bishop and our music by Judith Hasler to both of whom we are much indebted. Special services included Harvest Festival, but this year we cancelled our Harvest Supper due to the then recent tragic death of Lindsey Collecott, someone who did so much in the village and the Village Hall in particular. We held our usual Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service which was well attended and supported by local soldiers with the 3 wreaths being laid by local folks including Eileen Webster who at 99 years old is one of the last surviving WW2 Land Girls. Christmas Carols were sung around the tree on the Village Green. This relatively new format seems to be successful with a little over 50 local people attending and giving generously a total of £210 for

Crisis. Our Carol Service was well supported as was the Christmas Day service whereas the Christmas Eve service was again not. Perhaps the time has come to drop the midnight service – those who might regret that can of course attend at St Mary's.

Unfortunately, as is the way, we held two funerals; those of Mr Francis Moule and Dr Barclay Barrell, both well known in the village. Lindsey Collecott's funeral was held at St Mary's and a number of folk from St James and the village attended. At the other end of the spectrum, we had the baptism of Gaia Marchioni, whose parents live in Swards End and whose grandmother Geraldine is a regular member of our congregation. The sun shone and it was a lovely occasion.

All in all, quite a busy and varied year. Bring on 2024. Finally, we must again thank everybody for their unwavering support.

Contact Rev'd Chris Bishop, 01799 523722

Mike Dean and Lynne Ketteridge, Deputy Wardens

St John's Church, Little Walden

This year has again been a year of change at St John's but within the change we have had a steadying of our congregation numbers, with a small but appreciated increase in our average attendance. In a year of uncertainty it feels that God is blessing our small church community.

In Our Church: We said goodbye to John Saxon and hello (again) to Michael Lovegrove. We very much appreciate Michael stepping in to take our communion services, his wisdom, humour and guidance are always welcome. Tracey Nicholls continues to be a blessing to our church community and we are very fortunate

to have new members of our congregation who are able to step in and take services when needed.

We have seen sadness and joy in our church family this year, a faithful and steadfast member of our congregation died and we were privileged to hold her funeral at St John's. We have also had members of the congregation getting married in the church, a truly joyful experience not only for the bride and groom but for all of their church family. Another joyful occasion was our carol service, which featured carols and songs from Ukraine and was followed by a lively gathering in the village hall featuring Ukrainian food and treats. The event was appreciated by both the villagers and the Ukrainian families who attended.

In Our Village: On Good Friday we sold Hot Cross Buns on the green. We have led the Remembrance Day service at the war memorial and have purchased a "Tommy" silhouette for the village. St John's continues to financially support the Village Hall and we are working with them to provide a secure future. We are also involved in the life of the village through the WI, Village Hall committee and of course the pub.

In Our Wider Community: St John's giving increased to 30 percent of its income, we are very grateful to the generosity and financial commitment of all our congregation. This generosity has allowed us to continue to support our chosen charities, Self Help Africa and Farm Community Network UK. We have also raised money for Ukraine, Saffron Walden Foodbank as well as financially contributing to the youth work at St Mary's and the Gardner family in Romania. The church has also been used as a venue for an Italian themed concert and we hope to host more concerts in the future.

Fabric: Following the quinquennial report we have embarked on a programme of works for the fabric of the church, we hope to have these completed by the autumn of this year.

The trees around the church yard have been trimmed and 300 hundred spring bulbs have been planted and we look forward to seeing the new shoots of growth in the coming weeks. This is in line with our decision to only use locally sourced seasonal flowers in St John's, as a part of our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint.

Going forward: we would like to explore how we, as a congregation, can reduce our carbon footprint through heating the church in a more sustainable way, reducing waste and using our resources wisely. We would like to be able to use the church building as a community hub and we are looking into the best way to do this. In all our plans and hopes for the future we remain God-centred, praying that we will serve our community as God is calling us to do.

Helen and David Nash (Pro Wardens)

Contact Rev'd Michael Lovegrove,, tel. 01799 528232

Baptism Team

There were just 13 baptisms at St Mary's in 2023. Most were at 12.15 services, with only two forming part of a 10.30 service.

In March there were two particularly memorable 12.15 baptisms when, on both occasions, siblings were baptised in front of huge gatherings of family and friends. In August a valued member of our congregation was baptised at a 10.30 service, witnessed by friends and neighbours. Then in October the daughter of two members of our choir was baptised at a 10.30 service; a true church family occasion.

My thanks to all those who have ensured that these baptisms have run smoothly.

This year we have had no baptisms in January and February but the baptism 'season' at St Mary's starts again on 17th March, when we have 2 baptisms.

The Guild of the Holy Trinity

The Guild of the Holy Trinity was set up in 1513 by the Vicar, John Leche, and his sister, Dame Johane Bradbury, and endowed with money and lands attached to the church to help raise money to pay all taxes and tolls due to the King (the equivalent, perhaps, of our Parish Share today), and the wages of a priest to pray for souls. This priestly role was later expanded to include teaching local children. The Guild also controlled the Almshouses. Over the years, its municipal functions have become taken over by other organisations. You can read more in Kenneth Dixon's History of St Mary's (appendix 7) , and in the APCM annual report for 2023.

Traditionally the members of the Guild serve at the services of Holy Communion every Sunday at 08.00am and at 10.00am to support the priest and to lead the congregation in worship. The Guild, which originally met in the room over St Mary's South Porch, until recently drew its members from all areas of the Church family of St Mary's, and St James and St John's – the PCC, welcomers, sidemen and women, bell-ringers, the Baptism group, and others.

Now that Communion is given from the bottom of the Chancel steps by the priest, with one only sub-deacon needed to assist the priest, fewer people are servers, so, in effect, the Guild is currently no longer in operation as an organisation.

Noel Starr and Anna Martin

Welcome Teams

St Mary's Team of Welcomers have had another busy year with the congregation swelling again after the previous effects of Covid. The whole team enjoys greeting people as they arrive for all of our services during the year, morning, afternoon or evening and are on hand to help in any way they can. They will do their best to help with any queries or direct you to someone who can and of course they are there tidying everything away after the service.

We have over 30 people involved in the 8am and 10.30am services; some doing two shifts a month. The many other services during the course of the year keep them busy too, especially at Christmas, and 2023 was a very busy one. Teams for the special services can be as large as 14 so we are grateful for all the help we receive. We have lost a few members this year so we are busy trying to recruit new members.

There are many different tasks for the varying services throughout the year, not just greeting at the doors, but being involved in the lighting of candles and even the Church lights themselves at certain services.

We are grateful for all the volunteers who help on their regular Sunday morning services and especially on the Special Services that we hold throughout the year, sometimes stepping forward at short notice. The Tree Lighting Services were a good example where again this year extra volunteers stepped forward to greet over 900 people. For these services many people feel it is the start of Christmas and it is important that we are there to give them a huge welcome.

We look forward to another year of meeting and greeting and helping in any way we can.

Pamela Mugliston, Welcome Coordinator (contact Parish office)

Music

In what has been another busy year, it would be true to say that there have been both ups and downs. We are pleased to report that we have about 35 under 18s on the books ranging between Joyful Noise, The Junior Choir and the Choral Scholars. It is safe to say that commitment in a post-Covid reality is proving to be something of an enigma. For major occasions, we tend to be able field an impressive considerable musical force, though it can be somewhat thinner on a week by week basis.

We are extremely grateful to Kate Beare for once again taking up the reins of Joyful Noise - she writes "We currently have an enthusiastic group of 11 children, with 8 to 9 attending regularly. The children range in age from 5-7 and attend St Mary's Primary School, Katherine Semar School, Dame Bradbury's or are home-schooled. During Autumn '23 we sang rounds and part-songs, and played lots of musical games to build singing-confidence. We gave a mini concert at the end of term, and joined with the Brownies and Junior Choir at the Christmas Fair and the Christingle Service. This Spring Term we've added to our repertoire of songs and sang with the Junior Choir for Palm Sunday Family Service. During the Summer term it would be good to grow Joyful Noise. Please spread the word about this group to any families you know with children in Years 1-3. Huge thanks to SMMA for our smart new T shirts, and to Ruby Parsons and Poppy for their wholehearted and generous support each week."

The Juniors have had a good year and have continued to function as a closely-knit group of talented young singers. They have sung at a wide variety of services and we always try to give them a broad picture of services when planning their schedule.

At their peak, they numbered about 20, though there is now a need to hold another recruitment drive which is scheduled at the end of June. As with all of our volunteer ensembles, outreach and recruitment require an ongoing continual dynamic approach. My thanks go to Alison for her tremendously hard work as Junior Choir social coordinator. Bron Ferland has also helped enormously during the year though has officially stepped back from helping out on a weekly basis.

Encouragingly, the choral scholar scheme is bouncing back and we currently have 9 fine young singers. Two Junior Choristers (James and Alex) moved up from the Junior Choir, and Harry has re-joined the choir, having left the Junior Choir a little time back. Our thanks go to Noel Star, Ellie Beare and Lewis Colley for their help. The choral scholars provide a vital link between the Junior Choir and the Adult Choir. It is important to add that a number of young adult singers are now members of the adult choir as a direct result of this scheme.

The adult choir has seen some comings and goings but remains on a stable footing. Alas, through personal reasons, we have lost three wonderful altos since Christmas. In February, we gave a sad farewell to Joanna Byers as she continues on her life journey, though we are pleased that she will return from time to time to help out. Kate Beare has also had to step back from regular singing in order to focus on Joyful Noise. As I alluded to earlier, attendance levels are having an impact on choir productivity, and there are times when we have to think pretty creatively to find solutions to this. Whilst this is an ongoing issue, it may come as some comfort to know that the same issue also manifests in many choirs up and down the country.

St Mary's Brass group now no longer meet to practise weekly, though they did convene to lead the music at several

services and church functions including Easter day, Christmas fair, Christmas Carol Service, and a service following the coronation of King Charles. My thanks go to Phil Dudfield for his work coordinating this group.

Our organ scholar, Ziyi, has made a strong start to her time at St Mary's and she has already proved herself to be a strong addition to the team. Ziyi has conducted the choir and plays something in the service virtually every week. Ziyi also plays at Wendens Ambo church every month and is currently working towards her grade 6 organ exam, which, she hopes, she will take in the early Autumn. We are thrilled that Ziyi has agreed to stay for a second year.

The organ is now nearing the end of its working life, having given faithful service for well over a century. A statement-of-needs is in development and we are now starting to move forward with the process for ensuring that we have an instrument which is both befitting for a building of the magnitude of St Mary's, but is also musically versatile and robust so that many generations of people to come will continue to benefit from and appreciate high quality music making at St Mary's.

There have been numerous services and events during the year and space precludes itemising everything. I would, however, like to pick out one or two occasions: The full choir and musicians performed St John Passion by Bob Chilcott on Good Friday 2023 – this was a repeat performance from 2019, though it once again proved to be an incredibly powerful and poignant occasion. Easter day proved to be a celebratory occasion and it was great to welcome St Mary's Brass group to lead the music so thrillingly for this service. In October, the choir sang Choral Evensong in Birmingham Cathedral and it was moving to see the choir excel and sing in such a wonderful and friendly building. My

grateful thanks go to Peter De Vile and Caroline Goulder for organising this trip.

Excitingly, we have many plans for moving forward over the next year including a workshop performance of Dido and Aeneas in June, Pop-Up Choirs, and a choir trip to Norwich Cathedral in October. I look forward to reporting back much more in the near future.

The SMMA has had a busy and fulfilling year with many concerts organised. We have successfully instigated a further two concert series in addition to the lunchtime recitals – both a Spring and Autumn Coffee Concert Series. These concerts seem to be going from strength-to-strength and most importantly, whilst they are a boost to our funds (enabling us to support the Junior Choir trips to Cathedrals, buy new music for the choir, and help fund our various bursaries which support the church musical lives of our youngsters), they appear to be a very positive addition to the lives of some of the most lonely and vulnerable both within our church and town communities: such an important part of our mission.

Thanks to Peter De Vile, we were fortunate enough to have social media and organist sensation Anna Lapwood come and give a recital in the Summer, which attracted a huge audience and we're looking forward to another similar recital from Jonathan Scott in June this year! We also hosted an Organ Outreach Concert for years three and four of our local primary schools which was a great success and we are hoping to repeat this again in a similar way this year.

Our grateful thanks go to the many folk who work tirelessly to make things run smoothly, especially the SMMA committee. We would like to thank Jim and Siong Siong Butler, and Margaret Jacobs for their help as choir librarians. We must also thank

Bron Ferland for her help as choir administrator and Gill Gibson as our wardrobe mistress. Patrick Li has helped enormously with the Taize and Celtic services, he also helps with logistical matters and, most importantly, with providing wisdom. Heartfelt thanks go to Jeremy Allen, who continues to be a huge source of support. His musical expertise is a true gift to everyone here. 2023 marked the 10th anniversary of Jeremy in post here at St Mary's! Lastly, we would like to thank Jeremy Trew for his continued support and encouragement of all that we do here at St Mary's church.

Contact: music@stmaryssaffronwalden.org

Hannah Razzell

Oli King

SMMA Chair

Director of Music and Organist

Church Flowers

Limited flowers have been arranged in church throughout the year excepting in Lent and Advent.

Flowers were also arranged for the Coronation of King Charles III.

This year in consultation with Jane Knight, wedding coordinator, we have decided not to offer wedding flowers. Age is a factor in this as it involves time and labour. A big 'thank you' to Jane for her undertaking of wedding flowers.

This will mean a drop in income for the flower Fund.

Thank you to Gwynneth Nicholas for her loyal service as she has decided to retire.

We are a small team and getting older. The rota is very slim and new members are needed – help would be given. Sadly no brave men have joined us.

Finally a big thank you to the team for their loyalty and fellowship we share when doing the flowers.

Now in my 24th year as co-ordinator I end my report with words I came upon recently ;-

'In the beauty of a flower is revealed the hand of the Creator'

Pam Russell

Society of Change Ringers

The Society has a membership of approaching 40 ringers, made up of ordinary, associate, non-resident and life members. We usually manage to ring the 12 bells for Sunday Service and can rely on there being a capable band of around 15-20 ringers at practice nights. Visitors are welcome. Contact the Master, Stephen Wood master@saffronwaldenbells.org.uk

Sewing Group

We meet on Monday mornings 9.30 -- 11 am at The Priory, Common Hill where we have been gathering for nearly 50 years. It was originally the Rev: Peter Harlow who suggested that the church needed some colour with kneelers and banners etc.

We got some very good advice recommending a challenge i.e.smaller stitches (fewer to the inch) so sewers don't get bored ! And limited colours so the contrasts are in the stitches.

Anyone is welcome and can join us to work their own kneeler or can ask one of us to work it for them. There is usually a dedication to a dear departed or a cause for celebration stitched into the back of the design.

We have had some repair work to do where moth and mice had a lovely time over lock-down but that is now completed.

Contact Tessa Hawkes 01799 523888

Tessa Hawkes

Prayer Team

Our small team has undergone some changes during the last year; in spring 2023 Mike and Judith Felgate stepped down and Joe Hordern stepped down in the autumn. We give heartfelt thanks to all three for their dedicated service to the team over many, many years! But in turn we welcome Gill Caswell, Tricia Troughton and Brian Kerrison, who all bring many gifts and fresh ideas to our meetings. And we continue to thank Hilary Walker for the many cups of coffee and copious biscuits she provides at every meeting!

In 2023 Thy Kingdom Come, a prayer initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, was marked at St Mary's by a Prayer Space created by our team between Ascension and Pentecost, which was visited by congregation and visitors alike. It gave an opportunity to reflect on the storms we may experience in life and the love and protection of God in difficult times. Prayers could be added for ourselves and others in a challenging time for our world. Watch out later this year for a similar event!

In December we held a Creative Quiet Morning for Advent, beautifully led by our curate, Rev'd Ella Harris. The Prayer Team worked hard with Ella to produce a morning of quiet reflection through creative activities including water colour painting, clay pottery and Kintsugi along with opportunities to pray and be prayed for. Thanks to all who helped and to all who came to share the morning with us.

The Prayer Team continues to provide a monthly prayer for the Parish News and to update the Prayer Diary, available in church and online (last updated July 2023). We continue to pray for the life of our church and for the needs of our world, as we seek to encourage others and invite them to join with us in prayer, remembering the words of St Paul :

“Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5.17-18).

Contact: 01799 732 970 *Hazel Colebrook*

Julian Group

We meet on the second Tuesday of every month at The Priory, Common Hill 9.30 - 10.30 am, a change from evening meetings to avoid driving in the dark.

It is all very simple. One of us will read a random, short passage from ‘Enfolded in Love’ followed by half an hour of silence and then a discussion on what it meant to us individually before we close.

Julian of Norwich was a fourteenth century mystic and ‘Enfolded in Love’ is a collection of passages taken from Julian’s revelations as a dying young girl. On recovering she became an acolyte attached to Norwich Cathedral and after 20 years of pondering her ‘revelations she wrote them down. The first book to be written by a woman, in the turbulent years of The Black Death, it was lost for many years and is now found to be, in its simple and direct way, very apposite for the times we are living through.

If you are interested in knowing more please contact Tessa Hawkes 01799 523888

Tessa Hawkes

Home Groups

We are blessed to have several groups nearby which meet in people’s homes to study the bible together.

- The **Maypole Group** meets at 2.00 pm on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month and have been using the Church of England Pilgrim study books, 'A Course for the

Christian Journey'. For more information, please contact Ruby on 01799 501 381

- The **Greenways Home Group** meets fortnightly in Greenways on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm. For more information and to see if there is space for new members, please contact Andy or Hazel Colebrooke on 01799 732 970 or andy.colebrooke@gmail.com

Each home group has its own programme and approach to reading the Bible, use of course materials, discussion and prayer. Belonging to a home group helps to nurture faith and to deepen relationships with others, and this is particularly important in a large church such as St Mary's.

- **The Lectio Course** in St Mary's Parish rooms, during Lent, 2024, led by Ella, used video materials supplied by the organisation 24/7 Prayer International, featuring Pete Greig.

If you are interested in joining a homegroup, or finding out more, please contact the group coordinators to see if there is availability at this time or Rev'd Ella Harris - 01799 571023

email: revellaharris@gmail.com.

Anna Martin

Book Group

The St Mary's Book Group once again met monthly throughout 2023 to discuss books chosen by its members over tea and coffee and our traditional log fire in winter. We aim to cover a variety of books so, for example, Mrs Gaskell's classic Victorian novel *North and South* was followed by *The Thursday Murder Club*, and then *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. We also discussed books on different aspects

of collecting: *The Museum Makers* and *Mudlarking*, about searching along the Thames. *Tunnel 29* described escaping from East Germany, under rather than over the Berlin Wall, and for Christmas we read *The King and the Christmas Tree*, about Norway's annual gift of a Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square.

Helen and Robin O'Neill

Contact: Parish Office, 01799 506 024

Communications Committee

There are presently 8 of us on this committee which meets 4 times a year. We were sorry to lose Judith Felgate after 20 years on this committee and Dawn Saxon as they both moved to pastures new. We were pleased to welcome Anthea Slater, providing an important link with the Parish Office, and Simon Potter and more recently Lewis Colley - good to have someone younger and with a technical background on board.

I am pleased to be involved in keeping the website up to date as it is increasingly being used as the first point of call to find out what is going on in church. Although it mainly covers St Mary's SW and its daughter churches, we have made it easier to navigate to the websites of the other churches in our Team. Google Analytics indicate that it is well used by visitors; about 15,000 hits over the year and the 10 most popular pages in order are: the Calendar, Grapevine, Latest News, Sunday Services, Who's Who & Contact, Bookings Diary, Music News, Christmas Services, Parish News, Sermons and Media, and Parish News.

Thanks to Patrick Li for his help with the website and in particular for ensuring that the Sunday sermons are recorded and uploaded. Thanks also to Clifford Want for keeping the C of E's 'A Church Near You' website up to date with our details. We are particularly grateful to Steve Hasler and his team for

livestreaming a service each week and uploading them to YouTube. This is particularly useful for those who are not able to get to church each Sunday. We will make good use of the website to inform parishioners of the proposals for the new Lighting Project.

One of our objectives is to keep our parishioners well informed and we are pleased to have been able to get the PCC to agree to a summary of their meetings being posted in the Parish News. PCC members represent the congregation and a list of members is now posted in the West Porch of the church and dates of meetings are published. Parishioners are encouraged to speak to them or the clergy if they have any concerns or suggestions.

Many thanks to Andy Colebrooke for his skilful editing of the popular Parish News which is an important source of outreach and is always 'sold out'. Andy is due to step down in September after 5 years in this role, and we urgently need someone to take this on if the Parish News is to continue beyond then.

The updating of the various leaflets at the back of the church is a continuous job and many thanks to Clifford for his help with the formatting of these.

Clifford Want has continued to do a splendid job as our Press Officer and his press releases have ensured that St Mary's is regularly featured in the local press and we are grateful to the Walden Local for publishing all our press releases in the run up to Christmas. We have again been happy to join with the other churches in Saffron Walden in joint adverts of our Christmas and Easter services as this not only saves money but brings us closer together.

We have approved the wording for our new external Notice Boards and are aware that more work needs to be done to get

the design approved by the various authorities before going to tender.

Many thanks to Liz Lingley as our secretary for her professional and accurate minute taking.

It is not possible to mention everything we do but I am most grateful to all members of the Committee for their contributions to our work over the past year.

Contact: PCC Secretary Anna Martin 07562 506867

Martin Hugall, Chair Communications Committee

Parish Office

It has been a busy year as always in the Parish Office, saying goodbye to old friends, Dawn Saxon, and welcoming new ones, Anthea Slater.

A very big thank you to all the volunteers that regularly help out in the office as well as those who are willing to drop everything and run to help. The office simply would not be able to function without our wonderful volunteers who not only bring their time and energy, but also their warmth and laughter. It is a real pleasure to work alongside them week on week.

We will be looking for volunteers this year to do a big clean of the Parish Rooms Kitchen so if you love to clean, and wear your Marigolds with a smile, please contact the Parish Office to log your interest.

We have also been providing extra support to the parishes within the team without an incumbent, to help ensure the smooth running of the team.

Contact 01799 506 024

Anthea Slater, Parish Administrator

Claire Dunn, Associate Administrator

Weddings Coordinator

My role is to prepare wedding couples leading up to and including their wedding day which is a huge privilege and I feel very fortunate to be dealing with happy people anticipating a joyous day.

In 2023, there were seventeen weddings in total - five at Saffron Walden, three each at Littlebury and Gt Chesterford, two at Debden and one each at Hadstock, Wimbish, Little Chesterford and Little Walden. There were also two wedding blessings - at Gt Chesterford and Debden

We offered a live-streaming for the first time at St Mary's, Saffron Walden as the bride was from the USA so many of her friends and family members who couldn't make the journey, enjoyed watching the wedding from afar. My thanks to Steve Hasler for managing this so efficiently.

I am sorry that John, Alex and Paula have left the team. They, as well as Dawn, were valued colleagues and their departure leaves a gap in the wedding ministry. A big welcome to Ella though who will be taking her first wedding at All Saints, Gt Chesterford in May.

The Marriage Preparation course on 3rd February, led by Jeremy and Ella, was a happy occasion giving the seventeen couples who attended an opportunity to focus solely on themselves, their relationship and their wedding. The feedback was very positive, all couples saying how much they enjoyed the variety of whole group and breakout sessions as well as all having lunch together and sharing wedding nerves, plans and anticipation. My thanks to Anthea for producing the course material and Chris, Ruby and Marion for helping with refreshments.

Thanks are also due to Pam and Jan for their hard work and dedication in their role as vergers for all the weddings in

2023, not to mention the first one of 2024 which called for their skills at crowd management and technical prowess for some of the music!

This year, in contrast to last year, we have more weddings at Saffron Walden (11) than the villages (7). I think this is the first year for a long time when there hasn't been a member of the church family getting married but each wedding will be special and memorable in its own way.

Contact: stmarysweddings@outlook.com

Caroline Goulder Weddings Co-ordinator

Children and Youth Tinies

Tinies is going from strength to strength with 45 children on our books. I am blessed to have a great team who are amazing at welcoming, befriending, and supporting each parent or grandparent who comes through the door. It is great to get to know the families that come along and to journey with them through life's joys and struggles when bringing up a family.

For the last 20 minutes of our time together, we move to the front of the church where we have a small service, including kids worship songs, a story, and prayers. We also light our candle to remind us that Jesus is always with us, especially at Tinies. We also celebrate our birthdays each week, singing happy birthday to the children, and occasionally the adults, if they want to admit to it being their birthday!

Team JC | Wiggle Church

Up until December 2023, Team JC had been meeting, looking at different topics including the stories leading up to Easter, the attributes of God, followed by the seven 'I am' statements. Over the last year Team JC numbers had been low

and very sporadic. It was decided that Team JC format had run its course and that there was an opportunity to change the way we do Sunday School. Since January 2024 we have introduced our new initiative, Wiggle Church, which meets on the first Sunday of the month.

Wiggle Church is going well and we are averaging 12 children and 20 adults each month with about 25 different children having come along so far over the past three months, including some from the local schools who have no other contact with church. In January we explored Epiphany where we followed a star and looked at the three gifts Jesus received and how they showed who He was. We looked at all the good gifts we receive which make us thankful. We made a thankfulness jar each to take away and fill over the year, encouraging families to thank God each day for the good things He gives us.

In February we focussed on Jesus getting lost in the temple, playing 'Kim's Game' - where there are different items on the tray and one is removed, the children have to work out what is missing. Together we filled a bottle with rice, and placed different items which represented things that help us stay close to Jesus, for example, the Bible, Wiggle Church and praying hands. The aim was to find all the different items in and amongst the rice.

Finally, in March we looked at Jesus being tempted in the desert. This involved the children taking off their socks and throwing them at me! But then I held a big bible up in front of me and got them to throw them again, but this time it hit the big bible which protected me.

One of the aims of Wiggle Church is to encourage and equip parents to disciple their children at home, through bible reading and praying together.

Aftershock | Jimmy's Meal | DTI Hike | DTI

As always, each term, the young people put the Aftershock programme together, this includes bible studies and social events. Over the last year we have been exploring the Armour of God and animals in the bible, including quails, sheep and of course the talking donkey! More recently this term we have collated big questions which the young people have about faith and the bible. We have explored big questions like:

Why did God create Satan?

Why does God not always answer my prayers?

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?

Some brilliant questions and subsequent discussion and study which help to deepen the faith of our young people. As well as the bible studies we have enjoyed social events including scavenger hunts around town, Clip n Climb, and practised our ninja skills at Ninja Warrior in Chelmsford.

Jimmy's Meal was a huge success raising £3141 for the work of Jimmy's Night Shelter. It was a brilliant evening, with great food and entertainment from the young people. The young people spent all afternoon decorating the hall and the tables, preparing the food, transforming the parish rooms and rehearsing their entertainment pieces. The evening wouldn't have been possible without Tracey Nicholls, Helen Nash, Claire Dunn and Nic. My thanks also goes to Dave and Phoebe Nash for their help behind the scenes in the kitchen. This year we had Barry Griffiths from Jimmy's return, this time with Alison Morris, who shared her heartfelt personal story of how she came to volunteer at Jimmy's. Thank you to all who came along and supported the Jimmy's Meal.

Over the summer a group of 19 young people and leaders from Aftershock and Community Church Youth attended the Dreaming the Impossible Summer Youth Festival held on Staffordshire Showground along with 4000 other young people. In preparation for the event we joined up with our friends at the Community Church and together took part in a fundraising hike to raise money for a minibus to get us there.

Thank you to all who kindly supported us. It was a brilliant time away, spending time with each other, and it was great to see the youth from the two groups come and grow together.

Each morning and evening we would come together to worship God, hear some great teaching from the bible and spend time learning how to pray for each other and hang out in God's presence. Throughout the day, the festival offered a wide array of seminars covering essential topics such as how to read our bibles, the power of prayer, exploring faith with science, understanding mental health, and the art of worship and song writing.

Youth Bible Study

At our mid-week bible study we have been going through the New Testament letters, focussing on one or two themes from each letter. This term we have encouraged the young people to lead the bible study focussing on their favourite bible verses or passages. They have done so well in doing this and have encouraged our learning through different styles. We have looked at the parables of the lost sheep and the good Samaritan, as well as the story of Noah. We have even explored some passages in Ecclesiastes where we rewrote the verses to make a group poem.

H2H

H2H continues to be a great opportunity for the young people to lead a service in their own style. We have explored many different themes as we discuss questions around tables whilst eating cake. In our September H2H we heard from the young people who went to DTI. We are so thankful for those who come out on a Sunday evening to support our amazing young people as they use their gifts to lead us in worship and teaching at H2H.

County High Mentoring

I continue to go into County High as a mentor. At the end of the last academic year Kt (who works for SVST), and I had a meeting with Anna Moorhouse and Beth Robinson who are part of the Crocus Wellbeing Team. Here we were offered a meeting room in the wellbeing shed, to meet with our students. Before this we would be assigned empty classrooms which meant a lot of moving around the school between periods. As well as the room to meet, we have been given a school Teams account which means we can contact our young people over Teams to organise our own timetable.

I see nine young people ranging from year 7's to year 13's, all of whom have been referred due to an issue they are facing, whether that be in school, for example with their behaviour, or struggles with their confidence. Others have situations at home which they would like to talk to someone about. All the young people I mentor are great, and it is brilliant to be able to invest in their lives in some way and help them deal with the issues they are facing.

It has been great to be welcomed into the Wellbeing Team at SWCHS with our time and work being valued by the staff

there. They give such great support to the young people who need their help, and it is brilliant being part of the team.

Primary Schools | On Track | Mentoring | Christmas Lesson | SWAT

We have good links with St Mary's School with either myself or Jeremy going in each week to lead collective worship. As well as the assemblies, I also run an after-school club called On Track. At On Track we play games, look at a story from the bible, which they enjoy acting out, and finish with a craft. They also take over one of my assemblies at the end of term, where they perform in a drama and lead a game and a small talk on the theme.

I have been mentoring in Katherine Semar Junior School for a year now as part of SVST's Listening Service. Here I have been in contact with five children and provide a safe space for them to bring their worries and questions.

I was asked to attend the year 2 classes at Katherine Semar who were looking at how Christians celebrated Christmas. The children had previously come up with some questions to ask me, including, have I got my decorations up and what is my favourite part of Christmas, but also, why do we celebrate Christmas, and why is it important for me? The year 1 teacher had caught wind of what I was doing and asked if I could come see them afterwards. It was brilliant to join in with their excitement for Christmas and to share with them about my faith in Jesus.

The SWAT – Saffron Walden Assemblies Team - goes into most of the primary schools in Saffron Walden and the surrounding area, putting on a fun filled bible-based assembly. It is great to have so many open doors into the schools in and

around Saffron Walden. I currently lead this team and organise assemblies and dates with the schools. If you would like to join us as we take Jesus into the primary schools in the area, then please talk to me.

Sewards End Youth Club

Once a month St James Church in Sewards End hosts a youth club which I help to run. Over the last year we have been inundated with requests from young people who want to join the youth club, which has meant having a waiting list again. Through the youth club, we have extended invitations to families to attend Remembrance Day and Christmas services at St. James, with the young people also participating in the service. At the remembrance service, we created a wreath that was laid at the memorial.

Uni Students

At the beginning of September our new and current uni students got together for a takeaway and to chat about how everyone was doing at uni. It was a great opportunity for the new students to ask for advice from older students about what to expect. During the evening, we talked about how their faith had been challenged which opened up an honest conversation about life at uni.

NYMW

In November I attended the National Youth Ministry Weekend which is held in Birmingham. This was a great time to refresh, listen to some brilliant teaching and to spend time with friends who are in the same profession.

Thank You!

As you have just read, it has been a fun filled year in the life of the children and youth work at St Mary's Church. This could have only happened thanks to some amazing volunteers and

therefore my heartfelt thanks for their love and support goes to: Tracey Nicholls, Helen Nash, Dave Nash, Phoebe Nash, Claire Dunn, Hilary Walker, Tom Hunt, Mark Hopton, Gillian Hopton, Chris Cowling, Hazel Colebrooke, Pam Russell, Sue Birchall, Sheilah Girgis, Gill Caswell, Gillian Brace, Libby Richards, Steph Hall, Val Bowtle, Hazel Rayfield, Katie Boyce, Sue Powell, Judy King, Judith Hasler, Chris Bishop, and of course my wonderful wife, Nicola.

As you can see there is so much happening with our children and young people, and as the well-known passage goes, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

This is true for many ministries in the church but particularly the children's and youth work. If you would like to help with any of our children and young people's activities, I would love to chat to you more about what we do and how you can get involved. Even if you are unsure what you can offer, there are many different roles and tasks, regular and occasional, so please do get in touch.

Contact: youth@stmaryssaffronwalden.org

Matt Williamson

St. Mary's C.E. Primary School



2023 proved to be a huge year for the school with the highlights being the Ofsted Inspection and the completion of building and energy saving works at the school.

Our last Ofsted Inspection was back in November 2017. Typically, schools have repeat inspections within 4 years so we were long overdue. The school had been properly prepared for well over a year and so it came as some relief when the inspection was at last scheduled for 23 and 24 May. I'm very pleased to say that the inspection went very smoothly and the school was awarded a very solid 'good' rating by the inspector. The best way of illustrating the school's performance is to share an extract from the inspector's report.

'Pupils enjoy attending this small school. They learn and play together in a safe and supportive environment. The school's values of respect and compassion are demonstrated by all. This is a school where all are valued and differences are well respected. Pupils and parents/carers appreciate the teaching, support and high standards that exist at the school. There is a strong feeling of teamwork from leaders, teachers, support staff and governors, which supports pupils well..... Pupils behave well in lessons and move around the school calmly and appropriately as a result..... Pupil and parent surveys reveal an overwhelmingly positive response about the school. St. Mary's provides a happy and supportive school environment and a broad, engaging and well-taught curriculum, which prepares pupils well for secondary school and for life in modern Britain'.

The Headteacher, all school staff and the governing body were justifiably proud of these totally independent comments which reflected the enormous effort and commitment applied over a period of around 18 months waiting for the 'call'. What is

also pleasing about the inspector's comments is that they put equal emphasis on the pastoral care the school provides as much as the academic input. Exactly what a church school wants to hear.

In recent years one of the school's strengths has been its strong performance in supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). We have an excellent team which allows us to achieve this but unfortunately this creates a problem with lack of



space for 1 to 1 interventions for the children concerned. The school leadership team along with the governors have been trying to solve this financial problem for a couple of years. At last, 2023 saw a breakthrough. After months of lobbying, the

Chelmsford Diocese and Essex County Council's Education Board agreed to fund a good proportion of the cost to build two cabins connected to the rear of the school. The school made up the balance by using its reserves, saved over many years, and kind contributions from the Parent Teachers Association.

So again, a real team effort.



The buildings opened at the end of 2023 and are in full use. We have a new, fully kitted out library, an office for the

SEN staff and meeting rooms for them to use with pupils. This has made a massive difference to the school's ability to provide support it badly wants to be able to give to the children. Thanks must go to all contributors who have enabled this to happen.

One other 'infrastructure' highlight in 2023 has been the Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation project which has seen the installation of new solar panels which will provide free electricity for the school, an air-source heat pump to replace our outdated boiler, new roof insulation and LED lighting throughout the school. This has all been self-funded by an energy efficiency grant. All these features will generate savings in the school budget which can then be redirected to expenditure which will generate direct pupil benefit.

Apologies if this has all been a bit of a 'businessy' update but rest assured the school children have been actively involved in church activities and fund-raising activities too. The Easter Service, Remembrance Day and Christmas Carol Service were all well attended by our very well behaved and highly vocal pupils.

Food donations which provided 60 meals for the foodbank to distribute and a fun run which raised over £3000 for charity are just two examples of the great effort and support the children and their parents/carers give to the community.

I feel very privileged to be associated with our wonderful church school.

contact: info@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk

John Westnedge, Chair of Governors



St. Mary's Guiding Rainbows

The Rainbow unit has been busy this last year doing lots of different activities. They have worked on their healthy mind and nature interest badges, creating some lovely natural collages using leaves, as part of the nature badge, and having a digital detox for the healthy mind badge. They did activities thinking about themselves and other people for a unit badge called reflect. They also gained a fun badge all to do with hedgehogs, learning all about nocturnal animals. We have also celebrated occasions and special dates with themed activities, such as the coronation of King Charles. We continue to have a full unit with a very long waiting list.

Saffy Lester – Leader – 7thsaffronwaldenrainbows@gmail.com

Brownies

The Brownies have done lots in this past year! Most recently returning from a pack holiday, where we took 17 of our Brownies away for the weekend, lots of fun was had with the theme of animals and we were also lucky in the fact that it was mostly dry! The Brownies are always busy, with 36 individual interest badges being completed during the year of 2023, with performing being the most popular badge completed. We have also been doing a lot during meetings as our Brownies work towards the different awards Bronze, Silver and Gold. We also had the opportunity to have a couple of out and about meetings including a visit to Pets at Home, fun in the Bridge End Gardens Maze and a night walk. We have a full unit with a waiting list.

Julie Lester – Leader – 7thswst.marysbrownies@gmail.com

Guides

The year started with a very successful overnight trip to Hautbois, the Girlguiding Outdoor Activity Centre in Norfolk where we stayed in a cottage and did 4 different outdoor activities including fire lighting, climbing wall and zipwire. I took a well-earned break during the summer term after over 25 years of running a unit to indulge my love of camping and left the girls in Julie Lester's capable hands. In the Summer term the girls completed a range of activities and most of them managed to complete the Guiding History interest badge. At the end of the term, we were able to celebrate our first two Gold Awards and two of our girls were also nominated for a Jack Petchey Achievement Award. During the Autumn term the girls worked on their Innovate and Skills for my Future skills builders. In the Spring Term we have been continuing to complete a range of activities so that some of our older girls can achieve their Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. We currently have 20 Guides ranging from 10 years to 14 years and we hope that we will have five Brownies moving up to Guides after Easter. We also have a waiting list.

Margaret Jacobs - Leader - 7thsaffronwaldenguides@gmail.com

Rangers

In September we were thrilled to reopen our Ranger unit for girls aged 14 to 18 which meets at the same time as the Guides. Several of the girls also help with the Brownies.

Our groups are run by a small, dedicated volunteer team, and would love more adults to join the team. The girls are lovely and deserve support. Please email any of the unit email addresses for more information about how you can help.

If you would like to register a young member, please visit Girlguiding.org.uk, or contact one of the leaders. Rainbows are aged 4-7, Brownies 7-11, Guides 10-14, Rangers 14-18

Margaret Jacobs

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

The last year has been thankfully uneventful.

There have been a number of renewed certificates, and a few new ones, including Simon Potter, our churchwarden, and Nathan Colley, who will be a Choir Chaperone and is also taking on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer.

I still cover safeguarding for Vulnerable Adults – they are few, and have minimal regulated contact with any church member. Legally, we can only ask for a DBS check where there is **regular** contact with a person or group – that is, at least 4 times a month.

I am grateful to Judith Hasler for continuing to be our Additional Recruiter.

There have been no incidents this year relating to church activities.

Training

All people working with church groups should undertake appropriate training for their role. The Group Leaders have details of the level of training required and would be expected to ensure that their helpers comply. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the PCC to ensure that appropriate training is completed. I can provide training info if it has gone missing.

Training is done online, and is, broadly -

- *Basic Awareness*: to be completed by anyone who holds a role within the church, within six months of commencing in their role, and for anyone in a role who has not previously completed any online Safeguarding training.
- *Foundation*: to be completed in addition to the Basic Awareness by anyone who works directly with Children and/or Adults. Also to be completed by PCC Members, Churchwardens and PSOs.
- *Safer Recruitment and People Management*: to be completed by those who are responsible for safely recruiting anyone applying for a role within the church, whether paid or unpaid including those who are elected to roles. This would include PCC members and anyone who would be responsible for supervision/oversight or managing people in their church roles.

Kathryn Bennett contact kjbennett09@yahoo.co.uk

Mothers' Union

At the Mothers' Union AGM in 2023, no one was willing to stand as branch leader. Therefore, the members voted for a one-year trial of running the branch by committee. Considering change can be difficult, they have done very well in their first year. However, a committee chairman was voted by the members at the 2024 MU AGM to streamline the administration still further. The Mothers' Union meets monthly throughout the year and the meetings consist of Worship, Speakers or Social Occasions.

- **Worship** Our Ascension Day service took place in May when we welcomed Rev'd John Saxon as guest preacher. In June at our MU Wave of prayer service we celebrated our overseas link branches and the vital overseas work

carried out by the worldwide Mothers' Union. In September Rev'd John Risby preached at our corporate communion and in December many of our members attended the Quiet morning led by our curate Rev'd Ella Harris.

- **Speakers** In January Steve Hasler gave a very interesting talk on the Saffron Walden almshouses including new development planned. Maxine Paul spoke to us in March about her first year as Diocesan President, and our Curate Rev'd Ella Harris inspired us in November with her subject 'My Journey to ordination'.
- **Social Occasions** At our outing to Ickleton Church we were very impressed by the ancient frescoes on the walls of the Norman church. We were very grateful to Alan Hawkes for the interesting historic tour he prepared for us. This was followed by a delicious afternoon tea in a member's lovely cottage in Duxford. We also had the pleasure of meeting Lydia Smith, a former curate.

We enjoyed our traditional garden party in June in a members' lovely garden and the year ended with a very enjoyable Christmas party in the lounge at Custerson Court.

- **Tributes** I would like to pay tribute to Rev'd Margaret Davies who has taken early retirement due to ill health. We thank her for all the services she has given us at Advent and Holy Week and the hospitality she has shown us over the years at Berden and we wish her well.

Our thanks also go to our Chaplain Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop for leading our meetings and services, and entertaining us at the Christmas Party.

The committee is also thanked for their hard work. Housebound members are visited regularly and all members receive a birthday card.

A small MU choir practise and sing every year at the World Day of Prayer and at our Christmas Party. We thank our choir leader for her hard work training us and her hospitality.

Our members are a group of faith and friendship who support each other and the aims and objects of the Mothers' Union.

Brenda Sheath Email: davidsheath@sky.com

Tel: 01799 513204

Oasis Group

During the past year we have continued our monthly get-togethers at the Old English Gentleman on the first Wednesday of the month providing an opportunity for male social contact and support, particularly for those who may live alone or may be experiencing difficult circumstances.

Advertised through monthly notices in Grapevine with email reminders to our "regulars", all are welcome but I do ask those who plan to attend to let me know by the day before to ensure a seat at table.

Attendances have continued at post Covid levels, usually attracting between 5 and 8 participants. Contact Bill Rose tel: 516609 - email: wjr2163@gmail.com

Bill Rose

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee monitors the income, expenditure and financial assets of St Mary's and met on three occasions in 2023. Membership of the Committee comprised Richard Garvey (Chairman), David Birchall (Treasurer), Tim Game (until 26th February), Steve Hasler, Patrick Li (from 24th October), Robin O'Neill, Simon Potter and Denis Tindley.

The routine business of the Committee is unchanged:

- To receive reports from the Treasurer on the current financial position
- Consider any changes to our investments
- Consider requests for expenditure which need recommendation to the PCC
- Review the Remuneration Committee's proposals re the salaries of our employees
- Review the Treasurer's proposed Budget for the following year
- Review the draft Annual Accounts

Additionally the Committee reviews the interim management accounts, variances from Budget, cash reserves and the reserves policy.

2023 continued the return to more normal activities in the church, although the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that financial challenges remain. Congregations are still smaller than those pre-pandemic and as a result, the weekly giving by members of the congregation has not returned to previous levels. The 'Collectin' provided for contactless giving when we weren't taking an Offertory collection remains a helpful donation mechanism for the congregation as well as visitors to the church. We are fortunate to benefit from very generous donations and legacies and from increases by some of the congregation to their committed Stewardship giving.

Nevertheless the reduction in the numbers of regular members of the congregation in the last few years has weighed on the congregation's support to church funding. The Christmas Fair made a very welcome contribution of £4,800 and the combination of weddings and letting out church premises to third parties added over £15,000 more.

Current income in 2023 was a welcome £9,600 above Budget at £238,200 but expenses of £255,750 were £8,600 over, resulting in the total deficit for the year of £17,500, barely £1,000 better than Budget. This is our fourth year in the red and is currently budgeted to continue. We have the reserves to cope, but these are running close to our minimum comfort level of 3 months budgeted annual expenditure. We benefited from an extremely generous legacy from the estate of the late Lawrence Gooderham in 2023 but the policy of allocating such bequests to major projects means that it is not available to meet running costs. The Finance Committee has proposed, and the PCC has endorsed, a programme to raise additional funds for such current expenditure in 2024 including a Stewardship Appeal and, if necessary, a Gift Day.

Contact: Treasurer, David Birchall -
birchall.dj@ntlworld.com

Richard Garvey, Finance Committee

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

During 2023/24 we celebrated our 90th year since the founding of The Friends by holding an Open Day at Church. Following all our advertising, both in town and around the villages, we had over 300 visitors on the day which was amazing. We had displays showing the contributions of The Friends over the years with some interesting archive items.

Banners were made and hung on the columns displaying details of our contributions to St Mary's. The history and work of our Sewing Ladies was on display and attracted a lot of interest. Oli was kind enough to play for us during the morning and our Bellringers called the town to the event first thing. Refreshments were provided for all our visitors which certainly seemed to go down well. The event also attracted new members and we have recruited over 30 during this year alone which will help our contributions to the work of the Church.

This year we visited Southwark Cathedral which was amazing and of course lots to see after lunch in the close proximity, so a great day. Later in the year we visited Norwich Cathedral, also a spectacular building and right in the centre of town. Both of these trips had a full coach so lots of fun for us all. In April this year we are off to Rochester and then later to St Albans.

The Baptism Board continues to colourfully display the names of those baptised during April to March. You will have noticed a new Noticeboard displaying information relating to The Friends so any new activities will be there for you to check.

The Sewing Ladies continue their wonderful work with the kneelers and new ones will be dedicated again at the Patronal service in September. We continue our work in trying to keep down the moth population in the Church.

We look forward to a busy year ahead.

Contact Pamela Mugliston

pjmteddybear@btinternet.com

Archive Group

Thanks to the PCC's approval, I was able to move all existing archive materials that do not, at present, have safe storage in the Vestry, to the Muniments Room. I can report that

what I have gathered and documented has found a good and secure home.

I am pleased to say that, having suggested the Choir apply for grant money from an Airport Charity, enough funds were made available to put up sufficient storage shelves, enabling the Choir to sort out the large stocks of music that were housed in the Muniments Room.

We are very fortunate to have such a secure and historic home for our church records, and I would welcome the chance to store and catalogue any other items that parishioners have that are church orientated and need to be preserved.

I will continue to produce, in the Parish News, a monthly selection of interesting items that have appeared in past Parish Magazines and am pleased that, after a conversation with 'The Friends', we now have a display frame, paid for by "The Friends", in which we are able to show-case items of interest, in church, on the first Sunday of each month.

Contact chrismitre@hotmail.com

Canon Chris Bishop



Links with David and Sári, serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Romania

David and Sari Gardner have now been living in Romania for 22 years and remain members of Wycliffe Bible Translators, working both locally and internationally.

Their current primary project is working towards a translation of the Bible into the relatively new, government driven Standardised Romani. This emphasis is aimed at enabling teaching and accessibility of written texts across all Roma dialects in Romania.

This work has demanded training people with not only the time, but also skills and enthusiasm for the task. The project has been able to gather a small team together and has completed the translation of John's Gospel and Acts. In addition to preparing written translations, they are also producing audio books for use in churches and on the web. The book of Acts is well under way.

see :- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/fbNjdX7ccuMMubMn>

Whilst training to become a Translation Consultant for Wycliffe, Sari is working towards an MA in conjunction with Moorlands College. Sari has also supported consultant checking of translations in five different, non-Roma languages.

In addition to supporting translation work, David is heavily committed to supporting a multilingual publishing programme (PTXprint). This is receiving international acclaim for its ability to effectively and quickly prepare Scriptures for publication irrespective of language or script. In one case the type setting task was reduced from weeks to a few hours.

The highlight of summer 2023 was probably Aniko's wedding to Aron from Slovakia. This was a multi-national event with a civil ceremony in Slovakia and a church wedding at her home village in Romania, supported by Saffron Walden guests. Aniko is now

living and working in Slovakia. Mark, their eldest, is continuing his studies at Cluj university while also working.

Emma is in her final school year leading to her Baccalaureate exams in July 2024. She is hoping to study biology at Cluj university. One of the Hungarian high school traditions is a formal “Ribboning Ceremony” for final year students, including a formal dance, see [video of students dancing elegantly]

:- <https://photos.app.goo.gl/5dP9aarUc5JkyvCT7>

Erik continues at his school in the home village but is also enjoying competitive fencing as well as taking part in numerous local and regional maths competitions.

The family will not be able to visit supporting churches and friends in England this year, but will carry out short visits to Hungary. They are hoping to visit England in the summer of 2025.

Financially there was a shortfall in their support in 2023 which makes the ongoing help from St Mary’s, individuals and other churches particularly important and appreciated.

Gerald Gardner

ECO Church

The Eco team did not manage to apply for the silver award, but progress was made on several fronts:

Alison Trew’s lifestyle questionnaire elicited 59 responses. Many of them were very positive, showing how people were taking the issue seriously and doing what they could.

Chris Knight’s measurement of our church’s carbon footprint contributed to the process of planning our ‘pathway to

zero', as required by the diocese. The next major steps will be the LED lighting system and insulation of the Parish Rooms

Alison and Hazel continued to set up and manage our monthly Fairtrade stall despite the collapse of the Fairtrade organisation. It is a reminder to the congregation of our responsibility towards our brothers and sisters in more vulnerable parts of the world.

Biodiversity continues to flourish in the churchyard.

Very few people took up the offer of the group subscription to 'Ethical Consumer' so it did not prove to be a cost-effective way of encouraging ethical purchasing.

We still hope to achieve our silver award in coming months, but the group feels that the Gold Award is not viable without broader and deeper engagement by the congregation.

Contact *Edward Gildea* edward@edwardgildea.co.uk

Vision Statement

Our Mission

Sharing God's love

Our Vision

Our aim as a church is to:

worship God with joy and reverence

tell of God's love in Jesus Christ

learn about and live our Christian faith

pray and learn about prayer

serve God's world through prayer and action

offer Christ's ministry of wholeness and healing

encourage all to discover and use their gifts for God

engage with and nurture children and young people

welcome everyone warmly and offer generous hospitality

value and care for each other

In all this, we will use the resources we have - our time,

buildings and money - wisely in God's service.