



St Mary's – Apsley End

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2020

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Running the Church

1. Team Vicar

Revd Richard Howlett
Team Vicar for St Mary's
and St Benedict's churches

It has been a busy year and a year of some significant developments.

In my report last year, as part of our 'Welcome' strategy, I noted that St Mary's had adopted a 'Collect for Growth' and it is good that it is in use throughout the church; it has been encouraging hearing it used week by week in intercessions. It seems to be bearing fruit, and people have remarked to me that we have noticed some new faces in our congregation. The Course 'Everybody Welcome' was of course undertaken by a number of Lent Groups at St Mary's in 2019. The whole aim of the 'Everybody Welcome' course is for churches to look, in detail at ways to be more welcoming to both regular users and to visitors. Using feedback forms completed in the Lent groups, and out of the discussions which followed, the PCC adopted an Action Plan for our church. The actions were divided into 'Quick Wins', 'Medium Term' and 'Longer Term'. To date, progress has been made on a number of areas:

Quick Wins.

A new welcome card has been put into use. Explanatory inserts have been put in service books to assist worshippers. A new contact details card has been produced, with links to our GDPR policy. A card system has been employed so that people opting for non-alcoholic wine (Temporarily withdrawn due to Coronavirus restrictions), gluten free wafers, those seeking blessing only and child communicants can more easily be identified at the altar rail. A new 'Welcomer' role has been created, and a meeting took place in November for anyone interested in this new role. A team of 10 people were formed and have been working alongside wardens and sides people. The Welcomer team met in February to review how things were going, and name badges are to be produced for those acting in the Welcomer role to assist newcomers. Drinking water and glasses are now available at the back of church. (This will be reviewed regularly in the light of Coronavirus hygiene measures). My sincere thanks to all those who have been committed to making these things happen.

Medium Term

Pastoral care. Our groups reflected concern that we try to ensure people do not 'fall through the cracks' pastorally. Work is underway to produce a list of the congregation (including those who are less able to get to church regularly). Each PCC member will be given a 'Contact Group' to keep in touch with. Any concerns and needs of those members will be passed, with their agreement, onto the Vicar. Signs advertising our toilets have been installed, and we are working to ensure such information is as obvious as possible to allay any anxieties in visitors. We are also working on improved noticeboards. Refresher workshops have been organised for Readers and Intercessors and will take place after Easter. St Mary's have also signposted young people to the new youth group formed last Autumn by the Curate at Holy Trinity Church.

Longer Term

Several items were identified in group discussions and were discussed at the PCC meeting on 30th November. In brief:

- a. Welcoming people with needs – including adults with pushchairs and prams, wheelchair users. A small group agreed to meet to explore this further.
- b. Vehicle access to church. And experience of using the church paths especially in the dark. Fabric Committee are looking at ways to improve lighting and path condition
- c. Glass panels between church and refectory. Fabric committee are assessing options and costings and will report back to the PCC.

New Team Vicar

A second significant development was that we were able to recruit Father James McDonald to the ministry Team. The post, although based at All Saints, Kings Langley, contains the commitment to give 25% of Sunday time to St Mary's, and the church has been glad to have this support. After the extra demands on me and everyone following Father David's departure in January 2018, it was lovely to welcome James as a colleague, and for the Team to once again be up to strength.

Work with schools

I continue to try to serve the 6 primary schools that fall within the 2 parishes of St Benedict's and St Mary's. Foremost is my role at Nash Mills C of E school, where I am also a governor. I was glad to see the appointment of a new deputy head, Naila Bachour, who has been a great strength to the school. I was also involved, in the Autumn Term, with the appointment of a new Headteacher, and look forward to working with Allan Maher when he takes up his post for the 2020/21 academic year. It will be a great wrench to say goodbye to Rosie Washford-Mower, but we at least have the joy of being able to work with her to the end of the current academic year. It is always a pleasure to welcome the children, staff and families to church for school services, and to assist the staff in explaining aspects of the Christian faith including the Eucharist and key festivals.

I have continued to do assemblies and other activities at Two Waters and Belswains – the other two schools who have traditionally related most to St Mary's, and I value this link, which helps pupils and staff to put a face to me, as a representative of the local Anglican church. It has been wonderful, as ever, to welcome them to the church for their school services, principally at Christmas.

Lay Support

This will be evident in other reports, but I wish to include my appreciation for the work of our PCC Secretary, our Wardens and assistant wardens, those who look after the running of our church, including our Treasurer, our safeguarding officers, those who ring bells, pray for our needs and that of the community, those who clean and maintain our church, and publicize our life and work. Indeed, I thank God for all who are being church in so many ways. The leading of Groups, provision of lunches and other hospitality, including Saturday café, Solo Lunches and Messy Church, the excitement of our annual bazaar, which has also been such a good fund-raiser, and the welcome given to those bringing young children and babies to Buzzy Bees are vital to the work of being a welcoming church. At the door and on the web, in the pew or out in the street, people can be brought into a sense of the church as a welcoming family of God.

Outreach to Florence Longman and Water Mill House

I have been proud to support the work the church started prior to my coming as vicar. I am hugely grateful to the team who support this work. It has been lovely to see some residents enjoy our Angel Festival, and I have been pleased to put on special Eucharists at Water Mill House for Christmas and Easter. At the time of writing, the concerns over the Coronavirus mean that we have suspended visits to these two places. We shall explore ways to assure them of our interest and prayers.

A Final word

The unfolding impact of the Coronavirus means that we will need to reassess how we maintain our sense of being 'The Body of Christ' and how and in what ways we reach out in love and service to the community. The Church has faced wars and plagues and other crises down the centuries, and I feel sure we shall all hold onto the peace that only Christ can give as we weather this widespread crisis, which is affecting everyone in their lives, work and relationships. May I end, at this uncertain time, trusting ourselves to the future work God has in store for us as members of his church, in the words of Bishop Alan's Prayer:

Living God, draw us deeper into your love; Jesus our Lord send us to care and serve; Holy Spirit make us heralds of good news. Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us to live your love with

generosity and joy, imagination and courage; for the sake of your world and in the name of Jesus. Amen.

2. Electoral Roll Report (as at 2 April 2020)

Adrian Whalley

Members included on the Church's Electoral Roll show the Diocese the size of the congregation and is used to calculate the Diocesan quota which is paid annually. They are entitled to act as sides persons and vote for the church representatives at the annual meeting of our Parochial Church Council.

In April 2020, there were 56 members registered following some alterations over the year as people have moved or changed churches. 5 parishioners have committed to joining the new roll. This roll with 56 members will be presented for approval at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

3. Churchwardens

Dan Shirley and Harry Graham-Brown

Many thanks to the many members of the congregation who volunteer to do the many jobs that ensure St Mary's is a place for people to find and develop a growing relationship with God. Dan and Harry thank the Assistant Churchwardens, Rosemary, Sylvia and Tim for their work and support over the last year, as well as the PCC and other committees that make St Mary's run smoothly.

Following the 2019 Lent course we have implemented an Everybody Welcome action plan, with three levels of priority: quick and easy fixes, items that need a bit more time and planning, longer term goals (often requiring a budget). 2019-20 saw many of the first two categories implemented across the Church and the effects are being seen.

In 2019 we lost two of our most senior members, centenarian Ted Adcock and nearly-there Peter Ward. We all miss them both.

St Mary's welcomed Rev James McDonald and his wife Rachel as they took up the Team Vicar position at Kings Langley. James spends approximately 25% of his time at St Mary's, easing Richard's workload and is bringing his own fresh approach and ideas.

Every five years the church must undergo an inspection of its building structure. This took place in 2019 and found no Category 1 or 2 items which require immediate attention.

February saw the ceiling of the refectory re-decorated. Thanks to the Fabric Committee and the Working Party for their dedication and efforts in keeping St Mary's looking good and safe for all.

And then came Covid: the global pandemic has defined 2020. It has caused all communal gatherings to cease. This has been a huge challenge for clergy and congregation alike. We have all had to adapt to working and worshipping remotely. Richard and James have risen to the challenge to provide streamed services for morning prayer, compline and Sunday services. Meetings are now undertaken through Zoom, an app that many of us had never heard of in February.

4. PCC Secretary

Janet Wright

It has been a privilege and most enjoyable to be 'at the centre' of what is going on in our church since I became PCC secretary in March 2019. But of course, it's been quite a learning curve!

Over that time, we have had 5 full PCC meetings and 3 Standing Committee meetings. For all of these I should like to thank the PCC members for their cooperation in producing reports and forbearance with different methods for keeping in touch. We have moved to keeping all reports

online and displaying them on the screen during the meeting. Hopefully this means less paper is wasted in printing and also means that we can display other items of relevance easily during meetings.

I'm sure there is more we could do to streamline things by using technology further (perhaps we could invent some sort of person prodding device, socially distanced of course, to ensure PCC members respond to my emails in a timely fashion!).

As Secretary, I have also been involved with the 'Everybody Welcome' work following the lent course last year. It has been gratifying to see our progress on this over the year, still more to come!

And of course, helping to coordinate meetings and working together during the incredible upheaval of the Covid-19 crisis has been another challenge. We are so fortunate at St Mary's to have some very talented and innovative people who have been able to keep us all in touch.

If people wish, I can continue as Secretary until spring 2021 when I MUST and WILL retire, but do hope someone volunteers so I can help them into the role by then. Don't be frightened of being Secretary, it is really very rewarding!

5. Safeguarding

Susan Rivett & Katharine Harper

The Parish Safeguarding Officer is a key link between the Diocese and the Parish, concerning safeguarding matters having an overview of all church activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults. This role, at St Mary's Apsley End, is currently held by Susan Rivett and Katharine Harper. In addition, Susan has acted as Lead Recruiter.

The PCC has adopted and implemented the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church' and each Officer is aware of the safeguarding policy and guidance required for their role. Each PCC member needs to be DBS checked and complete training CO online as a minimum. Safeguarding is on the agenda of all the PCC meetings as required by the House of Bishops and the Diocese. The PCC approved a statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders and a process of ensuring that all those who volunteer to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be safely recruited. This resulted in over forty documents being written that includes the process as a whole, application forms, job descriptions for each role involving children's activities, interview questions and letters of appointment. One person has trialled the process and two are currently being considered. Harry Graham-Brown (Church Warden), Janet Wright (Secretary) and I met on several occasions to produce the necessary documentation. Many thanks go to for them both for their hard work, support, research, technical ability and independent advice which has made my job so much easier.

The Diocese have been very active and given clear guidelines on the level of safeguarding training that is required for specific roles which needs to be renewed every three years. It has linked into the Parish Dashboards, an online system that gives assurance to parishes that they are complying with statutory requirements and Church of England policies, or else it explains what actions need to be taken. It enables dioceses and the national Church to oversee compliance, and to focus their support on the areas of greatest need. Its primary aim is to make life simpler for Parish Safeguarding Officers. It shows an overview of their parish at a glance which can be shared with their incumbent, churchwardens or other authorised users.

Level 2 of the Safeguarding Dashboard focusses on Safer Activities. This requires the PCC to agree the list of church activities that need to be added to the dashboard. Currently we have registered Sunday School, Messy Church, Buzzy Bees, Solo Lunch, Working Party and Bell Ringing. Further fields then need to be completed with reference to safer recruitment including role descriptions, DBS clearance, risk assessments, insurance cover and levels of safeguarding training. The Dashboard does indicate the different levels of training for leaders (co-ordinators) and assistants.

We continue to raise the awareness that safeguarding is the responsibility of all. Copies of our safeguarding leaflet are in church and the policies for Safeguarding Children and Adults are

available in the Refectory. The parish has processed six new DBS checks which require renewal every five years. There have been no safeguarding issues reported within the parish.

6. Worship Planning Group

Sue Jakeman

The group comprises of the following members:

Rev Richard Howlett, Dan Shirley, Sue Jakeman, Melanie Henley, David Heath, Peter Bladon

We have met four times over the year in order to plan and develop the worship at St Mary's, in particular for special services that occur over the liturgical year. The group planned among other events, "Thy Kingdom Come", the Remembrance service and Harvest, Advent and Christmas services and carol singing at various venues in Apsley.

Sadly, the development of music within the service of Evensong has stopped, with numbers attending not increasing as we had hoped.

Due to the current situation, as with many events, this group will be unable to meet for the foreseeable future, but as soon as is possible we will be planning events that will reflect the welcome of God's kingdom here on earth and at St Mary's.

7. Fabric Committee

Grant Seymour

Grant Seymour, Michael Wright, Peter Bladon, Harry Graham-Brown

Another busy year for the Fabric Committee at St Mary's tackling new projects and keeping up with maintenance while also facing issues caused by nearby developments and neighbouring properties.

Some of the big achievements we have had this year are;

Quinquennial Inspection

On 4th September 2019 we welcomed Tony Booth, a new architect to St Mary's, to carry out our quinquennial inspection following on from the previous one carried out in 2014 by Michael Dales.

The report works on a format of categorising potential works required. The categories are;

- a. Category 1 of utmost urgency
- b. Category 2 recommended urgent
- c. Category 3 essential within the next 18 months
- d. Category 4 future desirable repairs, renewals and redecoration
- e. Category 5 routine maintenance
- f. Category 6 requiring specialist advice
- g. Category 7 monitor

It is with great delight that I can report we do not have any category 1 or category 2 faults listed. A great testament to all the hard work that goes into the upkeep of our church and working through all the issues that were listed in the 2014 report.

Nearly all other works recommended are already on the Fabric Committee list and we will continue to prioritise and work through these methodically.

The next quinquennial inspection will be due in 2024.

Refectory Refurbishment

The full renewal of the refectory ceiling has now been completed, including all tiles and gridwork. Lighting was re-positioned, and a great job was done by the contractor who was on-time, tidy and efficient in carrying out the work.

Now the ceiling has been completed, we are pushing to start the plaster repair and painting. Unfortunately, this will now be delayed due to issues surrounding Covid-19.

Once this stage is completed, we will then look to agree a date for the flooring works to take place which will involve inspecting the sub-floor for any faults and repairing as necessary, completely re-boarding the Refectory floor and installing brand new carpet tiles.

Trees

Considerable work has taken place to various trees in our grounds this year. These include;

- a. The trees that were impeding Nascent House boundary and scratching on their roof have now been felled or trimmed. This prevents any damage to their property that we would have been liable to pay for as well as causing nuisance noise on their roof.
- b. The fir tree that was overhanging the railway boundary and causing concern has now been trimmed.
- c. Trees affecting the adjoining development works have also been felled, including the rotten tree in the new church yard.

Ramps

New ramps have been purchased to greatly assist with access in and around the Church when needed. This includes a 7ft ramp for the main steps into the porch followed by a 5ft ramp in the porch. These are a great deal lighter than the older ramps and hopefully are much easier and safer to be put into position and for the person using them.

Housing Development

This year we suffered a great deal of disruption and concern over the new housing development built alongside the new church yard. We faced boundary, tree and legal issues along the way, but this has now all been resolved with the building works almost complete and a new fence erected along our boundary by the contractor. The earthworks have also been re-instated ready for grass seed this spring.

To re-iterate my sentiment last year; the work we do relies on the generous donations and bequests that have been left to St Mary's over the recent years and had it not been for those, the majority of the work you see throughout the church would have not been possible. Also, a big thanks goes to the working party and everyone involved who contributes to the upkeep of this amazing building in any way.

8. Working Parties – Monday & Friday

Peter Bladon

Both of these working parties have had a very busy year, and our local non church members continue to play a very active part in the teams' work. We have over the last year had a couple of new people join the teams both working within the church itself coming either on a Monday or Friday morning. Throughout the year these people do all those jobs which everybody else takes for granted, such as vacuuming, cleaning the pews, polishing, flowers, brass cleaning, cutting the grass, gardening, washing the towels/tea cloths, cleaning the kitchen and toilets, clearing rubbish from the churchyard, and clearing the recycling and rubbish bins in church – the list is indeed endless! Indeed, in a recent survey over 3,400 total hours have been completed by these working parties during 2019 which would have cost the church over £27,000 if we had to pay outside contractors to do the work.

At present the redevelopment of the old engineering works has been completed, and is awaiting new residents to move in. As reported last year two of our trees had to be cut down and a new boundary wall and fence put up. All of the above have been carefully monitored with the developer with guidance and approval from the Diocese.

We continue to work closely with the Fabric Group, and in some cases are able to do the work which would normally require an outside contractor, as well as identifying other major jobs that need to be done both on the outside and inside of the building.

We do have a list of work that we are aiming to do, which the group review each year and update, as well as discussions over a cup of coffee and biscuit (and sometimes even homemade cake!) and a chance for fellowship, and we would always welcome new members – just come along either on a Monday or Friday between 10am -12 noon and we will find you a job!! Having said that at present (due to the COVID-19 situation) we are not meeting.

We again this year held our “Christmas Party” in January at the Toby Inn, which was enjoyed by the fifteen of us who were able to attend. So many thanks to all those who work so hard to help maintain the church for both the congregation and our local community.

9. Servers

Jim Aylott

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the server team for their services to the Altar during this past year for our Sunday Eucharist and at the special services we also have during the year. And again for the team’s help with visiting priests. This has been most appreciated in making them feel at ease and comfortable with our Sunday Eucharist. The same for the visiting Organists as some like to practice on the organ before the start of the service. That’s why the Church is open at 9 o’clock to accommodate their request.

I would like to thank Peter Bladon for standing in as a server at Christmas Day Eucharist. This is the one service that’s difficult to fullfill because of family commitments on Christmas Day. We are only a small team, and are all here for the Midnight Mass. It’s not the service that takes time it’s the clearing up at the end that takes the time. The congregation have long gone and we are the last to leave. It can be one o’clock or later in the morning before we leave the Church.

Easter services are better; there may be more services, but they are spread out more evenly. We could do with a bigger server’s team then we could split ourselves between Midnight Mass and Christmas Day.

And I would like to thank the young lady Daisy who has helped me when we have the Reverend James McDonald with us for our Sunday Eucharist. James likes to use incense and having that extra pair of hands makes a big difference. It’s a bit difficult using the thurible when on your own so thank you for your help Daisy.

If anybody would like to join the server’s team please come forward to any members of the team or speak to Father Richard for more information. The only golden rule is to be at the Church for 9.30am on Sunday mornings.

10. Sacristan

Jim Aylott

I would like to thank all members of the congregation who have donated their unwanted candles to me in the past year. And especially the Alcoholics Anonymous group who gave me a large number of candles last year which I am still using. I am very grateful for this as it does make a big saving on my budget.

During the year I have managed to obtain a collection of candle holders so now I can accommodate most candle sizes because I keep finding boxes of strange sizes of candles that we haven’t been using in our Church services which we can now use, some of you may have noticed that during the services.

I would like to thank some members of the working party who during the past year took time to repair and make good with a coat of paint, the frames which are hung around the Church for our candle lit Midnight Service. It did look nice but like most things it didn’t last as one section went up in smoke and flames! Now a new one has to be made for this year, well done Tim.

The Chalices we use for Thursday and Sunday Eucharist are all sterilized each week I do this to help keep them in a clean and hygienic state and ready for use again. I like to do the same for the thurible after we use it as the incense does dull it and I like to put the shine back on it again.

We do have a limited choice of incense for use at our Sunday Eucharist and I am very tempted to purchase a brand of Incense from the Vatican City which are really are good smokers! They really do bellow out the smoke, but we got nothing like that here at Saint Mary's!

I am still using part burned and second-hand candles and slowly getting through them which does save me buying new ones. And, in most cases, they are better quality candles.

I do try to work within my allocated budget for the year and make savings where I can. Candles aren't cheap to buy, and the quality is poor for the price you pay and now most candles are made with vegetable wax with a mix of bees wax not like the old days when they used bees wax only.

11. Bell ringers

Brian Watson
Tower Captain and Steeplekeeper

Service ringing for the 10.00 am and the monthly 6.30 pm Sunday services has generally been maintained. We also rang for the Christingle service/crib service on Christmas Eve and the Christmas services. This year we were not able to ring the old year out on New Year's Eve.

Two of our recruits have moved to Devon and are now ringing at Dawlish. We have gained another recruit who is making steady progress. We would welcome anybody who would be interested in learning to ring.

During the year two quarter peals were rung:

- a. June 11th, Norwich and Cambridge Surprise Minor was rung by a visiting band
- b. November 23rd, Plain Bob Doubles was rung for the Western District Quarter Peal weekend.

We also rang on April 18th, at the Archbishops' request, to show solidarity with the people of France following the devastating fire at Notre Dame.

We rang for the funerals of Ted Adcock and Peter Ward.

In May we hosted the Western District Striking competition, when we catered for over 60 people for tea, being placed second behind Redbourn. We, together with Redbourn, represented the Western District in the Kimpton Cup in September. Redbourn were third and Apsley fourth. In June the Western District hosted the Coburn Trophy 8-bell striking competition at Hemel Hempstead. The Western District team, which contained three Apsley ringers, was placed first. Chris Gill was a member of the Young@Herts team that competed in The Ringing World National Youth Contest which took place in Liverpool. The Young@Herts team was graded 5 using the new GCSE grading system.

On the social side we enjoyed ringing at seven churches in Berkshire for our outing, our thanks to Geoff Fielding for organising it.

12. Fund Raising Group

Vivian Hagel

The Fundraising Group met several times throughout the year to organise various social and fundraising events.

The group members currently are: –

Vivian Hagel (Chair), Rosemary Bladon, Dan Shirley, Roger Witts and Tina Howard.

The year began with the annual Epiphany Games in January. Only a small group gathered but had great fun playing a variety of board games.

The following event was the Pancake Evening on Shrove Tuesday. This was well attended, and we were again delighted that the clients and a member of staff from Nascent House joined us as well. Many thanks again go to Gemma Townsend and Sue Jakeman who supplied and cooked the huge quantity of pancakes. These two events raised just over £55 in donations.

On Saturday 30th March a special 'Lent Lunch' was organised. This was held in place of the monthly Solo+ Lunch to help raise money for our supported charity – Cancer Research. A total of £97 was donated at the lunch. A big thank you to all who organised, provided, cooked and served the lunch.

The next fundraising event was our ever-popular Quiz Night also held on Saturday 30th March in the evening at Nash Mills C of E School. This popular event was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who came. Dan Shirley, our stand in quiz master for the evening, read out some challenging questions set by Adam and Odette Morley. Many thanks go to all who supported and helped make this such a successful and enjoyable evening. The total raised from the quiz and raffle was £214.

During July we held a Strawberries and Cream Tea. The weather again was perfect, enabling us to sit outside and enjoy the sunshine. There were games and activities that were enjoyed in the churchyard. This social and fun event contributed a further £103.25 to our funds.

During September we must thank Angela and Roger Witts for hosting their Cheese and Wine evening. This was a wonderful social gathering with Roger's homemade bread with a selection of French cheeses and wine as well. This evening raised a pleasing £225.

Our last but one event of the year was an Organ Recital in October. We were delighted that Laura Cahillane, one of our regular organists offered to play for us at no charge. The afternoon was enjoyed by all who came and was finished off with homemade cakes and refreshments generously provided by members of the church. Thank you to all involved in making this another successful event which raised just over £300.

Our last event of the year was the Santa Sleigh. These outings which take place throughout Dacorum from the end of November up to just before Christmas are organised and run by the Hemel Hempstead Rotary Club. On Tuesday 3rd December a small group from our church and a couple of people from St Benedict's Church and of course our very own Santa went out collecting for local charities and our respective churches. It was a wonderful and fun evening, which brought joy to many local families, whilst raising money for charity. Peter and Rosemary attended the presentation evening on the 15th January to receive a cheque for £410 to be shared proportionately with the two churches.

Finally, on behalf of the Fundraising Group we would like to extend our grateful thanks to everyone who has supported and helped at all the events we have held throughout the year. We look forward to arranging more fundraising and fun events throughout 2020.

13. Communications Group

Laura Graham-Brown

The communications group has had some good successes in 2019.

In line with the welcome project within St Marys we designed and compiled welcome information pages to insert into the service books for every season of the church. Late 2019 and early 2020 we started to add information pages to the front of service books.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to decorating the boards in the refectory and we look forward to getting back into church to do a welcome back board.

Now into 2020 we face the challenge of communication with a home-based congregation. The church emails have become more often and the challenge of online services have given various people new challenges.

14. Defibrillator Group

Janet Wright

Having bought an automatic defibrillator (AED) in 2018, it was realised that most people knew nothing about what it was, where it was or how to use it. So, a group consisting of Katharine Harper, Grant Seymour, Susan Rivett & I have now held 6 'Defib Debunked' sessions for various different parts of the church family.

The basic message is that it is stored on the pillar in the refectory on the way out to the toilets and that if someone collapses and does not appear to be breathing, firstly ask someone to call 999 to get assistance, then fetch and open the defibrillator and switch it on. It will talk to you in a loud voice to tell you what to do (as will the ambulance control on the phone). Don't worry about causing harm.

We plan to repeat the session again later this year, but the group is always happy to demonstrate at any time!

Finance

15. Accounts

Peter Bladon
Treasurer

ST MARY'S CHURCH - APSLEY END				
FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR		31st December 2019		
	Actuals	Budget for 12 months	Actual 12 months 2018	
INCOME :	£	£	£	
General Fund				
General Collections	3,725.01	3,500.00		3,252.75
Pledged Giving	25,393.60	25,000.00		23,690.46
Tax Refunds	7,477.88	6,500.00		6,523.04
Fees	3,229.00	2,500.00		2,179.00
Christmas Bazaar/Bike Ride	4,719.81	3,500.00		4,153.55
Special Collections	1,492.89	1,700.00		1,734.18
Donation 200 Club	574.00	750.00		868.00
Donations -General	3,928.48	3,000.00		2,991.51
Donations - Use of Church Facilities	1,763.00	2,000.00		1,888.00
Organist Sponership	847.50	0.00		270.00
Wootton Bequest	9,000.00	15,600.00		12,710.00
Fund Raising(80%)	720.80	0.00		273.74
General Fund Total	62,871.97	64,050.00		60,534.23
Fabric Fund(Restricted)				
Interest on CBF Funds	316.48			
Fabric Fund General Total	316.48			
Restricted & Designated Accounts				
Wootton Bequest Interest/Grants	3,847.33			
Education Fund	199.85			
Churchyard Fund	268.99			
Donation fund	4,116.68			
200 Club	1,250.00			
Solo Lunch	212.60			
Buzzy Bees	573.27			
Fund Raising	997.80			
Restricted & Designated Totals	11,466.52			
TOTAL INCOME	74,654.97			
EXPENDITURE :				
	£	£	£	
General Fund				
Clergy Expenses	1,049.91	1,800.00		1,651.82
Organist	3,360.00	3,000.00		3,310.00
Repairs and Maintenance	626.69	650.00		634.47
Utilities	4,078.49	4,500.00		4,498.36
Insurance	2,285.76	2,300.00		2,252.42
Sacristy	558.55	650.00		561.75
Administration	769.68	800.00		832.79
Diocesan Parish Share	44,782.00	44,782.00		41,626.00
Parish Administrator	3,868.00	3,868.00		3,433.00
Special Collections & Charities	1,492.89	1,700.00		1,734.18
General Fund Total	62,871.97	64,050.00		60,534.79
Restricted & Designated Accounts				
Fabric Fund General	1,096.90			
Education Fund	452.79			
Churchyard Fund	281.00			
Donation Fund	2,372.50			
Solo Lunch	0.00			
200 Club	1,294.00			
Buzzy Bees	500.00			
FundRaising	997.80			
Wootton Bequest	9,000.00			
Restricted & Designated Totals	15,994.99			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	78,866.96			

However, it is important to point out that the bequest donation of £9,000 covered the loss for the year to balance the books. However, this was £6,600 less than had been budgeted for.

The total expenditure was down £1,178 on budget which was a good result and was mainly due to a very tight control being maintained on all the accounts throughout the year.

Looking at our total expenditure, we had to pay 84% (£53,059) in respect of our Diocesan Parish Share, clergy expenses, organist and Benefice administrator. As you can see from the balance sheet, we have a very small reserve amount in the general fund. Hopefully this gives you all a clear idea of our current financial situation, but if not please speak to me.

It is important to note that the following accounts are all restricted accounts i.e. the money in them cannot be used for the day to day running costs of the church.

- a. *The Fabric Fund* reserve at the end of 2019 now stands at £42. The only income during the year being £316 from CBF investment. The expenditure from the account was for PAT testing, and part payment of the quinquennial report.
- b. *The Education Fund* has benefited from income from Messy Church of £199. While £263 has been paid out towards expenses for Messy Church and £189 for Bibles for Nash Mills School (to be covered by a grant from LGREF in 2020).
- c. *The Churchyard Fund* has benefited from general donations during the year of £238 plus £30 from the War Graves, £281 was paid out for six new replacement standard roses, oil and petrol for the mowers/trimmers and general maintenance of machines making a small loss over the year.
- d. *The Donation Fund*. This shows a net profit over the year of £1,744 mainly due to a bequest from one of our members who passed away towards the end of the year and donations by her family. Also, the donation from the Rotary Club from our participation in the Santa Sleigh collection in 2018. Most of the Solo Lunch balance at the end of 2019 (of £212) was used to pay towards their lunch that was held in January 2020. As already mentioned, the '200' Club generated £574 to support the general fund as well as paying out £720 to lucky winners. My thanks go to Tim Ward who runs the club, and to all who support this important fund-raising scheme. New members are always welcome!
- e. *The Buzzy Bees* have continued to support the church from their income this year, with a donation towards the use of the refectory of £500. During 2019 they did get a donation of £250 from the Rotary Club which enabled them to buy some new equipment. My thanks go to them for their continuing support.
- f. *The Fund-Raising Group* raised £997 during the year, and this was split between the congregation chosen charity Cancer UK Research £277 (20%) and the General Account £720 (80%). Many thanks to them and to all those who supported the events that they ran.

It is important to note that the following Bequest, for accounting reasons, is clarified as a Designated Account i.e. can be used by the P.C.C. to support any Church Account. This was due to the fact that no instructions were left in the bequest as to how it should be used.

Wootton Bequest. The income on this account is made up of a VAT refund of £3,355 in respect of the decorations on the inside of the church plus interest of £492. The expenditure was a grant in respect of covering the shortfall on the General Account of £9,000 for 2019. The P.C.C has agreed that up to £20,000 from this account will be used to cover the costs of the work in the refectory being carried out during 2020.

At the present time this account has the only reserves that the P.C.C. control to cover any loss on other accounts.

The budget for the 2020 General Fund is attached to these reports. This shows we are faced with a deficit on the general account of £5,600. However, this was prepared before the full effects of the COVID -19 virus had been realised, and certainly any fund-raising events that are run later on this year will be seriously affected, as well as our general collections.

My thanks go to Colin Gage, our Independent Examiner, and to the Finance Group of Ann Wiggins, Jim Aylott and Tim Ward for their support. Also, to the Sunday counters for their time and work.

However, my last thanks once again go to you for your continuing financial support of God's work at St Mary's, and within the local community of Apsley and Nash Mills.

17. Budget for 2020

Financial Group
February 2020

INCOME	£	
Collections in Church	3,800	
Pledged Giving (Stewardship)	26,000	
Donations – Gift Aid	10,000	
Donations - Use of Church Facilities	1,800	
Tax recovered through Gift Aid	7,000	
Fees	2,500	
Christmas Bazaar & Bike Ride	4,000	
200 Club	550	
Special Collections	1,500	
Fund Raising	710	
Organist Sponsorship	500	
Income deficit	5,600	
Total Income		£63,960

EXPENDITURE	£	
Clergy Expenses	1,300	
Repairs & Renewals	650	
Utilities	4,200	
Insurance	2,300	
Sacristy	650	
Administration	800	
Parish Administrator	3,617	
Diocesan Common Fund (Parish Share)	45,543	
Organist	3,400	
Special Collections	1,500	
Total Expenditure		£63,960

Notes

(1) There is no expenditure shown in respect of Charities except for special collections.

18. Independent Examiner

Colin Gage
Independent Examiner

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019 which are set out on pages 1 to 3.

Respective responsibilities of members and examiner.

The Parochial Church Council consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- a. examine the accounts (under section 43 of the Act),
- b. to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act) and
- c. to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report.

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the Parochial Church Council concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - a. to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act, and
 - b. to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act; have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: Colin Gage

Independent Examiner Dated: March 2020

19. Stewardship Secretary

Jim Aylott

The P.C.C. and myself would like to welcome and thank the new members who joined St Mary's Stewardship scheme last year and also to thank the existing members for your financial support throughout last year and especially those who increased their pledge giving to St Mary's Church and I hope all of you will continue your financial support to the Stewardship scheme at St Mary's for the new financial year.

The membership of the Stewardship now stands at 41 members of whom 6 members no longer pay income tax which means I can't claim back the tax for them. I have also lost 5 members in the past year.

We now have a credit card reader to use in Church though not many people are using it for our weekly collection. The congregation prefer the collection plate instead, but it is early days yet and the card reader was reasonably well used at our Christmas bazaar and used exceedingly well at family baptisms.

Once again, the Inland Revenue personal tax allowance now stands at £12,500 before you start paying income tax. Please make sure you are paying enough income tax for me to claim back the gift aid.

Our Diocese Quota has been increased again for the start of the new financial year, please read the Treasurer's report for more details.

I can only say the Diocese Financial Board recommends that each member of the congregation should be giving at least 5% of their total income for the year to the church. I do agree this is not possible for everybody to pay this high level of finance each week but that is what we are expected to pay for our Parish Priest to continue to do his work for us in Apsley.

The stewardship scheme is the main source of income for St Mary's Church but the income from this is well short of our expenditure. Costs keep increasing year on year and our biggest cost is the Diocese quota which we have no control over. So, it is very important to review your pledged giving to the church each year and to try to find that bit extra to help reduce the deficit.

Stewardship is not entirely about money but also giving St Mary's some of your spare time to help out with some of the daily and weekly tasks that are carried out at our Church both inside and outside. There's always something that needs doing and more help would be most welcomed. We few are all trying to make St Mary's a pleasant place to come to for our weekly worship as part of our Stewardship.

Once again, I thank you for your financial support to St Mary's Church during the past year and wish you all a happy Easter.

Worship & Study Groups

20. Sunday School

Peter Bladon

Our Sunday School has continued over the last year to be in a good state with the average weekly attendance between 6 – 10 children. Our actual membership is about 20 children, however in today's modern world some only come once a month mainly due to family demands. Our attendance over the summer holidays were high when we have special events such as the Teddy Bears annual picnic. With the current virus situation, we are looking at giving the children worksheets from 'Living Water' books which follow the weekly readings for them to use at home.

The children continue to look forward to sharing with the congregation what they have been doing at Sunday School at the end of the service – sadly at present this is (due to restrictions) on hold – but it will be back soon in some form or another!! Meanwhile many thanks to the congregation for giving them their support, and always a round of applause for their work!!

We have over the last year had support from the Diocese showing us ways we can grow our ministry to children, but a great deal of this relies on the support of parents. As restrictions change so Sunday School will move with the times.

Finally, my sincere thanks once again go to the teachers who continued to work on a rota basis, for their support and commitment throughout last year. We would of course always welcome any new ones to help spread the load, just speak to me!

21. Messy Church

Laura Graham-Brown

The monthly Messy church congregation has changed over the year as some children move on away from Messy Church and new families have come and joined us. The congregation continues to be

wide age ranged from a baby to 80+ in age with everyone joining in all the activities from games to crafts to worship.

Congregation numbers have varied from 10 to 30+ with a wonderful occasion when the clergy outnumbered the children. The service always continues whatever the numbers and we have tried to cater for the varied ages. We continue with a combination of activities, simple worship and a shared meal.

It has been great to see friendships develop over activity tables and real faith develop from simple activities such as writing a simple prayer. A huge thank you to the planning team for your prep work and for the regulars who come every time and stay to help clear up. The cooking and kitchen team have been amazing and re-arrange the refectory during worship and produce a welcome meal of baked potatoes and baked beans. And lastly but not least, a big thank you to the working party who fetch down and put away boxes every month and clear the porch ready for our next creations.

Into 2020 we face the challenge of continuing to serve the Messy Church congregation remotely. We ask for prayer and inspiration as we seek ways to stay in touch and reach the people on the messy edges of our church family.

22. Thursday Morning Group

Revd Richard Howlett

It has been a good year with the Group. We meet most Thursdays straight after the 9.30 communion, and start with hot drinks and biscuits, kindly produced by members of the group. We usually read the Gospel for the following Sunday, and sometimes the epistle as well. The Group are getting more confident with finding cross references in the Bible, and some very interesting discussions have taken place. Sometimes we use Lectio Divina (a way of meditating on the words of the text). A few sessions have been led by Revd James McDonald, and one or two, very ably, by group members when there are no clergy.

This year we invested in a large-print Bible, and another member of the group bought one, too. We shall need to get more of these if people find they are struggling with the size of print in church Bibles. Numbers attending have ranged from 6 to 11. The higher numbers reflect when we have sometimes attracted one or two extra people: e.g. when doing the Lent course, including of course 'Everybody Welcome' last year. This year we joined other Lent groups in doing 'The Greatest Showman', but the group meetings had to cease when the Coronavirus restrictions came upon us so suddenly. We shall have to explore ways of continuing the group after Easter, as the home isolation situation persists.

23. Thursday Evening House Group

Harry Graham-Brown

The house group has met on most Thursday Evenings. We have been looking at the previous Sunday's readings and discussing these. During Lent we started the course based on The Greatest Showman but due to Covid-19 have not completed it. We will come back to it after Easter.

24. Monthly Home Group

Sue Jakeman

The group meets once a month to pray for the Health and Healing of individuals and the world and to study the word of God.

The evening has followed a similar routine for the past few years, although the venue has changed. Many thanks are sent to Viv for her hospitality. Thanks to Lillian, who has provided excellent Bible study material, which has been very thought provoking.

After our Bible study, we use the words of the Healing service to guide our prayers for the world, the country, our local community, church community, friends and family. We always seek permission of the person or a relative before we pray for them. Only a person's Christian name is spoken out loud during prayer time. Any details are kept strictly confidential within the group.

Our prayer time finishes with 5 minutes of silent private prayer, ending with saying the Grace and an appropriate prayer which brings the evening to a close.

The evening finishes with coffee, biscuits and a chat.

Any prayer requests should be made to Sue Jakeman, Rev Richard Howlett or any member of the group. The group consists of Sue Jakeman, Katherine Howlett, Viv Hagel, Lillian Hepwood, Brunhilde Davis, Shelia Mackie. Rev Richard also joins us when his diary allows.

The group would welcome anyone interested in joining us.

Community

25. Baptism Visitors Group

Revd Richard Howlett

The baptism visitors from All Saints met with St Mary's during the vacancy period, to help advise and encourage them in their work. The last joint meeting at St Mary's took place on 9th March 2019, attended by the newly appointed Team Vicar, James McDonald. Thereafter we have reverted to meeting separately. The team includes processing baptism requests for St Benedict's parish; sadly, there are very few of these.

There have been Baptism Team meetings several times in the past year. These usually take place at 10am, with the families' baptism preparation meetings following at 11. The Team consists of the Vicar, Peter and Rosemary Bladon, Colin and Susan Rivett, and Sue Jakeman and Gemma Townsend. The number of baptisms carried out has reduced, 9 in 2019, compared with 17 the previous year. It is to be hoped that this will increase again in the future. I am truly grateful for the commitment of these volunteers, their passion to encourage families in the Faith, and to giving a real welcome to families, many of whom come to us with little experience of church.

We continue to offer Saturday morning families Baptism Information sessions at 11am approximately monthly. This seems to work well, enabling families to arrive and enjoy some hospitality in the café before assembling in the church. I am grateful for the volunteers who have put the technology in place for each session. After an introductory talk and film, baptism visitors circulate informally among the families, getting details on our application forms and handing out GDPR notices, and then discussing possible times and dates for Baptism or Thanksgiving services, and giving families a copy of the book 'Making the most of your child's baptism' by Ally Barrett.

Most families tend to opt for a midday Baptism, although we do offer Baptism in the main morning service too. Many godparents and families travel some distance, so the service at 12 midday is easier to manage.

Following the Baptism, families receive emails updating them on social and other events at St Mary's to help them feel in touch with the church. The challenge remains to encourage more of these families into an ongoing relationship with church. Some do gladly accept invitations to Buzzy Bees and Messy Church, and some Baptism enquiries have arisen from Buzzy Bees in particular.

At the time of writing, there is great uncertainty about the baptisms that we have so far scheduled for spring 2020. In the light of the Coronavirus crisis the Church of England has issued guidance limiting the number of those who can attend baptisms; it remains to be seen how many families will wish to defer until the situation resolves itself.

26. Marriage Preparation

Grant and Jo Seymour

There isn't a formal report for marriage prep as this hasn't taken place this year as we haven't had any weddings upcoming yet.

Unfortunately, Grant and Jo will no longer be able to do the marriage prep because their evenings are now so full since the arrival of their new baby son. Are there any new volunteers who could take this on with Richard?

27. Buzzy Bees

Delia, Sheila, Ann, Yvie, Helen, Amanda and Lilian

We have had another successful year at Buzzy Bees with a consistent attendance of 14/16 children with accompanying adults. We seem to be achieving our aim of giving them a welcoming atmosphere to socialise and relax whilst watching their children play together. The provision of toys, craft and singing activities and refreshments seems to suit their needs.

It's also been a bonus new baby year and we've had a group of mums who enjoy sitting together to chat and share ideas and experiences. It's a delight to see the babies develop from week to week.

We've been very fortunate to receive a donation of £250 from the Rotary Club. We were sponsored for this by a grateful couple who have been bringing children and grandchildren to Buzzy Bees for many years. The new equipment of a Wendy House and train with very practical play table have been very popular and welcome.

The Christmas Party was a great success with Rosemary and Peter giving out presents as Mr and Mrs Father Christmas and Richard talking to them about aspects of the Christmas Story.

Our annual outing to Djs Play Park was much enjoyed in the summer and we're hoping to repeat that this year. We were also very lucky to have good weather for our outside activity day at the end of term. We will end the spring term with an egg hunt in or outdoors according to weather.

We've been very pleased to have two new helpers this year. Helen and Amanda have been a wonderful support and asset to our group. We all get lots of pleasure out of watching the children play and develop.

28. Solo Plus Lunch

Joy West

This year, I took over Solo Lunch from Jean Chrisp. Although, originally only for those who live on their own, I have invited others to join us. Hence, we are now known as Solo Plus Lunch. We share a lunch time meal in the refectory once a month. This is a good opportunity for members of St Mary's congregation to get together for conversation and fellowship. A bigger group means more to share the workload and, hopefully, more people to get to know each other.

In March, we shared a lent lunch with other members of the congregation. I am grateful to those who provided home-made soup and bread and those who donated cheese, butter and apples. This year, donations were sent to Cancer Research. We were joined by James who spoke about the local work of Cancer Research which he, his colleagues and volunteers do in Hemel Hempstead.

Most of our monthly lunches take place in the refectory. However, in August, sixteen of us enjoyed a barbecue outside in the churchyard courtesy of Ralph Henley and Bob Wiggins. It was good to welcome back Jean and Michael Chrisp to join us for this lovely occasion.

As December is such a busy time, we decided not to have a lunch as usual but to go out for a meal together in January. So, eighteen of us enjoyed a two-course meal plus coffee or tea at The Plough in Leverstock Green. Everyone agreed that this was a very enjoyable event.

Each month, there is a list to sign in church if you wish to join us for Solo Plus Lunch. I keep in contact with all those who live on their own to encourage them to join us. Anyone who is not well enough to join us still receives a phone call so they can keep in touch with news from the group.

My thanks go particularly to Sheila Mackie, Ann Wiggins, Viv Hagel, Jenny Houghton, Melanie Henley, Colin and Susan Rivett and Peter Bladon who have helped me with shopping, preparing food, making mains and desserts, laying tables, serving, clearing and washing up. Solo Plus Lunches wouldn't be possible without this wonderful team of helpers.

29. Saturday Community Café

Peter Bladon

This outreach to our local community has continued successfully over the last year on every Saturday of the year. The use of this time by various Church groups to meet, rather than during the week, has continued to be used successfully. The café has been supported by not only our own congregation, but also by various visitors including walkers, visiting bell-ringers and people visiting the area. Also, for those bringing their children to be baptised as they have the chance to meet other members of the congregation, as well as the baptism visitors.

As I write this the full effects of the COVID-19 virus are beginning to change everybody's way of life. As the church is currently closed, we are making use of Zoom technology for very jolly 'Saturday Cafes' from our own homes. We are even managing the committee meetings too!

My thanks go once again to those who gave up their Saturday mornings over the last year, and every couple of months helped run the café, and supply the high quality and quantity of refreshments, as well as talking to those who come in. Some of the people who help run it, are now (due to government advice) in the self-isolation category. Hopefully, over the coming months the situation will improve, and this important outreach will be back up and running with all those homemade cakes!!

30. Christian Aid

Rosemary Bladon

This year we will again be holding a Café to raise money for Christian Aid – which will be on Saturday 16th May from 10am to 12 noon. We decided a couple of years ago that collecting door to door was very disheartening for our small group of collectors and so decided this was a pleasanter way to “do our bit”. This year the theme is “Climate Justice” – there is a magazine at the back of church to explain it. If you are able to supply some cakes or support the café on the day, we will be very grateful.

P.S. This will probably not happen due to the Virus outbreak.

31. Community comes to us & we go to them

Rosemary Bladon

Florence Longman House – We continue to go for a Communion Service at 9am, on the third Tuesday of the month. There are usually 7 or 8 residents, but any members of St Mary's congregation would be welcome to join us. The bulletin is delivered every week and the Benefice Newsletter quarterly, so that they can stay in touch.

We also start the service on Palm Sunday (weather permitting) there, with the blessing of the palms and a hymn or two, then we walk along Weymouth Street singing and with the big palms to show what it's all about! If we time it right, we enter church just about on 10am to start the next part of the service.

Water Mill House Care Home - After the service at Florence Longman, we then go along to The Water Mill for the service there at 11am – sometimes having popped into Buzzy Bees on the way so get the full range of ages! Some of the residents come down to the lounge on their own, but others need bringing in various wheeled vehicles! There might be 12 or so there and recently we have been brought biscuits and a drink afterwards, so stay for a chat. Any of our congregation would also be welcome here.

Our **Carol Singing** last year started on November 30th when we went to The Paper Mill Pub to sing carols before they switch on their Christmas lights. They kindly let us collect for The Hospice of St Francis there, from the patrons.

On December 3rd 6 of us with 2 from St Benedict's went with Father Christmas on the **Rotary Club Sleigh**, around the Belswains Lane area to collect for various charities. This is done by a number of different groups and the total is shared evenly between all those collecting – to allow for different weather conditions.

The 10th December found some of us at Florence Longman House for our annual “concert”– carols, readings and jokes.

16th December we were at The Water Mill – again singing and reading.

Apart from school visits for carols and end of term services the last event before our main Christmas services was **The Crib/Christingle Service** on Christmas Eve, where the children were able to place some of the figures in and around the Crib before collecting a Christingle in exchange for a donation towards The Children's Society.

Our main Fundraising event of the year is our **Christmas Bazaar** – in 2020 it will be on Saturday 21st November between 10am and 1pm. This is sometimes the only time some people come into church – but we always hope they will “come again this year”. Last year we made – with some before and afterwards – the splendid total of £4,061 and welcomed over 450 people through the door.

The money raised at the bazaar is very important as it goes towards the general upkeep of the church, which helps to keep St Mary's Apsley End going for future generations. So, thank you for any support you give.

When we have the church open on a Monday and Friday for the Working Party to do their jobs we often have people come to look round – for various reasons such as “I came here as a child” or “my parents were married here”, so it is good to have a chat and hope they might come at other times.

We also have a **branch of AA** who meet in the refectory every week and are very grateful for the facilities and the help it gives them.

32. Nash Mills C of E Primary School

Rosie Washford Mower
Headteacher

It feels very strange to be writing this as we end our second week of offering a different type of school. In the past two weeks our numbers have hovered around a dozen children, those of key workers or who are vulnerable in some way, looked after by four staff.

However, it is time to reflect on the previous twelve months, and, especially at such a challenging time for everyone, it gives me an opportunity to celebrate all of our accomplishments with you. We appointed a new Deputy Head, Naila Bachour, who was previously at Abbot's Hill School. She is quite a dynamo and has injected a new energy – which is what this role calls for. I was delighted when Alison Bill, who had been in the role for the previous few years, changed her mind about leaving and has returned to the Nursery and lead the Foundation Stage. She remains as committed to the school as ever and is currently busily involved in looking at how we can use technology to help deliver effective learning for our children who are at home.

We trained two teaching assistants to become qualified teachers last year and it was so gratifying to see their progress. They already had degrees and so they embarked on a course run by the West

Herts Teaching School. One gained a post at Micklem School from September and is doing well. We appointed the other, Katie Lewis, and are delighted with her progress. She is being well-mentored by one of our staff.

Writing continues to be a focus for our children, who need encouragement with a range of skills, such as spelling, grammatical structure and punctuation. The teachers and teaching assistants are working hard to support the acquisition of these skills, whether as whole classes, in small groups or through individual interventions. The new times tables check comes into place this year and we took part in the pilot last summer. It was good in that it gave staff and pupils a chance to see how it will work, but frustrating in that we received no feedback. Of course, along with all other statutory tests, these will now not take place this year, but I hope that there is feedback for schools so that we might be able to see if there are areas we can improve upon.

One of the highlights for KS2 children, when it comes to school trips, continue to be the annual visits to different places of worship, and these took place last year. The children enjoyed these immensely, as they are great opportunities to see what they have learnt in the real world.

The children who are in the Football Team reached the quarter finals of the local league – and then schools had to stop. The boys were so disappointed! However, a generous parent has funded a new kit for them, and they are delighted...I'm not sure that the Y6 lads will get back in it before they leave us in the summer now, but the others will enjoy wearing it with pride in the autumn!

The Christmas performances were wonderful, as always, as were the Carol Concerts. These raised money for different charities, including the hospitals who had treated our former brave, brave pupil who lost her four-year battle with leukaemia in November. The whole school family was affected by the loss of a bright and gregarious girl, who was always full of fun during her limited time with us. It came as a big shock as she had been well enough to join her classmates for the last few months of the summer term. We thank God that she was able to take part in the Leavers' Disco and attended the Leavers' Party, having as much fun as everyone else. We will never forget her.

The Choir again sang at the Angel Festival at St Mary's and had a wonderful time. It was an honour to watch them singing their hearts out with the lovely acoustics that the Church building affords. Thank you to Katharine and Viv, along with others, for all the liaison and organisation for this event.

We had a Prayer Week in November, set up by the marvellous Danielle from the Expressions Academy. Children made bracelets with beads to remember people they could not be with, or who had passed away. There was a sand tray so they could wipe out some things they did not like, a board for them to ask God questions or to show Him their gratitude. There were some different pairs of shoes and they were invited to think of people who might wear those and what their prayer needs might be. It was a thought-provoking few days and I am grateful to the Trustees of the Leverstock Green RE Fund who helped to fund this special time. The children were really enthusiastic about it, with many choosing to spend some of their lunchtimes there, as well as their allocated lesson time.

20 pupils from our Choir really enjoyed singing at the Royal Albert Hall, just a month ago. How long ago it seems now! This was the Hertfordshire Schools' Gala and included performances from the Hertfordshire Schools' Youth Orchestra and some talented dancing from secondary School students. Fiona Barrett, who leads our choir so well, is always so good at organising opportunities for our Choir to perform and also enjoyed watching one of her daughters perform in some of the dances!

It was a very late evening, but the following day, Naila, Ben Masters (our Vice Chair of Governors) and I took 10 children to Westminster Abbey as we had received invitations to attend the Commonwealth Service! We decided to give the opportunity to the current Year 6 children and names were drawn from a hat. It was quite a fraught start as there were very limited trains running into Euston that day, and staff (and my husband!) were frantically contacting their car insurance companies so that we could transport pupils to St Albans station. However, in the end we managed to get a train from Hemel Hempstead and took our places near the entrance. We also had the honour of one of our girls, whose name was also drawn from a hat, being chosen to present a posy to one of the Royal Family – and upon arrival, we found out that Ruby would be giving hers to the Duchess of Sussex. It was a lovely moment, and an amazing day.

Richard and Sue Jakeman continue to provide me with a lot of personal, as well as professional support. Richard leads collective worship several times each term, always willing to help if I am out. We continue to meet regularly to review the progress in children's learning in RE and I am grateful for the opportunity to share what is happening in classes. Sue is as marvellous as ever. I am grateful that at present, she and David are helping by taking on the additional important job of cleaning areas of the school that have been in use, as our usual cleaners need to self-isolate, one due to age and one due to a medical condition.

This brings us back to now, in this worrying and unprecedented time. It is a strange way to be spending the last few months of my thirteen years' tenure as Headteacher at Nash Mills, but it is now time for me to hand over the reins as I choose to spend more time with my family. It has been an absolute privilege to work with my wonderful team and lead the school for such a long time. I know that Allan Maher, current Deputy Head at Micklem School, will be a good successor, not least as he will have all of your support. I will always cherish my time with my family at Nash Mills – but that is not over as I will nip in, now and again, of course; try keeping me away!

Thank you for all your support over the years. Stay well, everyone, and keep safe.

Best wishes and God bless.

33. Oxygen Recovery Service at Nascent House

Vivian Hagel

During 2019 many members of our church congregation continued to support the programme known as Oxygen Recovery at Nascent House. We do this by providing a welcome box for each new client on their arrival.

These boxes and the contents are coordinated and delivered by Susan Rivett and myself. The welcome boxes contain many useful items including essential toiletries, various stationery, stamps, an alarm clock, sweets and a plant. We have also received some donations throughout the year which has enabled us to buy extra stock and plants when needed.

Last year between January and December we made up a total of 40 boxes. We received many cards and letters from the clients thanking everyone at St Mary's, for their generosity. Certainly, many new clients arrive with very little, so this means a huge amount to them.

In February on Shrove Tuesday we were delighted to see a number of clients join us for our annual Pancake Evening, and in July at our Strawberry and Cream Tea. In December at our Angel Festival, the clients made an amazing Angel for our display. They also joined us for the carol singing by the Nash Mills Primary School Choir followed by afternoon tea in the refectory.

Throughout the year we delivered Easter Eggs, Advent Calendars and a Christmas Hamper filled with seasonal goodies. All these were all generously donated by members of our congregation.

One or two clients have helped in the churchyard alongside the working party. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming a few of them at our regular Sunday morning services too.

Susan and I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported the provision of these Welcome Boxes.

We are always looking for new contributors or anyone who wishes to make a financial donation. For further information please contact Vivian Hagel (01442 394657) or Susan Rivett (01442 266129).

Church Hierarchy

34. Team Council

Peter Bladon

“Our Vision is of a community where Christ has been brought to the community and the community has been brought to Christ. Our Mission as churches in this benefice area is to maintain sacred spaces, and be flexible, interactive and collaborative with the use of resources”

The Team Council has had three meetings over the last year and continues to work with the four P.C.C.s of the Benefice towards the above vision. There are two groups who report back to the team council at their meetings. The main areas of discussion at these meetings were around the appointment of the Team Vicar at All Saints and the appointment of a Curate at Holy Trinity and her funding.

- a. *The treasurers' group* (made up of the four church treasurers) continues to report back to the council at every meeting, as they monitor and discuss the health of the finances of the four churches. Once again during 2019 the group only needed to meet twice to discuss various finance concerns and have continued to maintain a good working relationship. They once again drew up the fees to be used in 2020 for Marriages and Funerals which were then approved by both the Team Council and local P.C.C.s. They also proposed to the Team Council the split between the four parishes (based on CMF supplied from the Diocese) of Clergy Expenses and Benefice office expenses. This was passed back to local P.C.C.s for approval.
- b. *The communications group* - Its main aim is to communicate information across all four churches by use of the website, all of the churches of the Benefice update their own church information on the site. Mark Gritten, our excellent webmaster, has continued to work to improve the user friendliness of the system. The copier in the Benefice Office has been replaced in September 2019 and a new contract signed.

There was no joint Ash Wednesday service held last year as the installation of Father James as Team Vicar at All Saints took place on 4th March.

The Benefice 'Anniversary' service was held at St Benedict's on the 13th October 2019 and was enjoyed by all those who went to it. Hopefully this year it will be held at St Mary's in July! A good Quiet Day was held at St Paul's Chipperfield on the 31st August on a wonderful summer's day. On the social side and to finish the year off a Benefice Barn Dance was held at Nash Mills School on the 14th September which was well supported by all four Benefice churches.

At all meetings there are parish updates from the four churches which allow any concerns to be brought to the attention of the council.

35. Deanery Synod

Peter Bladon

The first meeting took us, in February last year, to St Mary's in the Old Town and was an open meeting. The main items were talks on local policing, and emergency planning by Paul Mitson – District Commander for policing in Dacorum, Kerry-Anne Cooper – CEO and founder of Liberty Tea Rooms and Community Hub and Canon John Williams, who is Clergy Major Incident Convenor for faith groups in Hertfordshire. All of which were found by those who were there to be of great benefit, as the questions asked proved!

As normal the meeting also received reports from the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee, Deanery Lay Chapter, Treasurer and feedback from General Synod as well as hearing about a planned Deanery Outing to Ely Cathedral on 10th August. We had an update concerning Children's ministry across the Deanery and had reports on what the parishes were doing in this area. We had the "Swop Shop", an opportunity to share good ideas, and experiences across the parishes of the

Deanery. Finally, we had an update on the life in the parish of St Mary and St Paul, and how they were working on getting some community-based activities going at St Paul's.

The second meeting took us to St John's Church, Boxmoor, and again was an open meeting where the main item of the evening was a talk about "Becoming More Confident" This was led by the Revd. Canon Tim Bull the St Albans Diocesan Director of Ministry. He helped us to think about how we can choose to do some things that people of all ages will welcome, making the choice to share the good news of Jesus Christ in perhaps different ways.

We had the normal reports, and an update on the life in the Parish of Boxmoor.

Finally, we had the 'Swap Shop' and heard that a few churches in the Deanery were now successfully using a SumUp card readers (including our Benefice) to accept payments, and donations.

The final meeting of the year was held in October at All Saints, Kings Langley. The main speaker was Margaret Pritchard Houston who is the St Albans Diocesan Children's Ministry Enabler. Her session dealt with how we as churches can capitalise on the contact we make with families who bring their children to be baptised, and build ongoing relationship with the families. We had the normal reports as well as one on the very successful Deanery outing to Ely.

We had an update on the life in the Parish of All Saints containing the foundation of a weekly Tiny Tots group and the rekindling of the links with the primary school, and the secondary school in the parish.

The Deanery Chapter continues to work well together, and the Deanery Lay Chapter (formed in 2016), has had several meetings over the last year, and has continued to develop into an important source of contact between all the lay members of the parishes of the Deanery, and the sharing of ideas.

Events

36. Angel Festival

Katharine Harper

Saturday 7th – Sunday 8th December 2019

Our Angel Festival was a free to enter and free to visit event for the whole community, we saw it as a way to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, bringing together schools, local groups and charities at St Mary's Apsley End.

This was our second angel festival, the first was in December 2017, and once again the church was filled with a multitude of Angels, created by people of all ages and representing a wide range of life in our community. We were blown away by the creativity shown in the angel displays: there was such variety around the church, it was a real feast for the eyes – and also so different from 2017!

We loved all the angels, from the glittery creations made by preschools and primary schools; Colin's massive angel in the rafters of the chancel; the angels made from natural materials by the scouting groups and Boxmoor Trust; the knitted and crocheted angels from members of our congregation, WI and Florence Longman House; the amazing pottery angels created by Kings Langley School. We had 2D and 3D angels, pretty angels and thought provoking – even challenging angel displays.

It was wonderful to see some visitors take their time as they went around the church and others (particularly the children) charge into the church, dragging their parents behind them, so they could excitedly find their own angel.

More angels were made throughout the weekend thanks to a band of dedicated crafters, and we were able to offer tea and cakes thanks also to everyone who gave up their time to help with refreshments and to welcome our visitors.

Highlights of the festival include: our afternoon tea on the Friday for residents of local elderly care homes and for residents of the Oxygen Recovery Programme, where we enjoyed musical entertainment from Nash Mills C of E School Choir and Melanie's lovely flute playing – as well as a visit from Santa; an informal family carol sing-a-long on Saturday and a beautiful, reflective Compline service to close the festival on Sunday evening.

As well as welcoming visitors, the festival was a great opportunity for those of us who were 'helping' to enjoy this break from the busy-ness of the lead up to Christmas and enjoy the opportunity of just being in church and to spend time together.

37. Hike & Bike

Rosemary Bladon

In 2019 I did the "Hike" again and covered about 18 miles while visiting 22 churches in the Deanery of Hemel Hempstead. I raised £1,009.50 and with Gift Aid it made £1,201 so would sincerely like to thank all who supported me. I was very tickled to see in the accounts for The Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust for 2018 – 2019 figures not yet available – that St Mary's Apsley End was listed as the church which raised the most money. So, I will need to see if I am fit enough to try to do it again this year!

I must, as always, thank those who were at any of the churches to welcome participants – whether on foot, bike or last year motor bike or car!! It does make it nicer especially if you are on your own, to have someone to talk to when you check in!