

St Mary's – Apsley End

ANNUAL REPORT

3rd April 2022

including Agendas and Minutes for the Annual Meetings



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
-------------------------	---

Agenda for The Annual Meeting of Parishioners to elect Churchwardens	2
--	---

Agenda for The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM).....	2
---	---

Minutes of meeting 25 April 2021 in church and on Zoom.....	3
--	---

Minutes v3 of meeting 25 April 2021 in church and on Zoom.....	4
---	---

Running the Church.....	6
-------------------------	---

1. Current Vacancy for the Vicar	6
2. Electoral Roll Report	6
3. Churchwardens	7
4. PCC Secretary	7
5. Safeguarding	8
6. Joint Worship Planning Group	8
7. Fabric Committee.....	8
8. Monday and Friday Working Parties.....	9
9. Servers	9
10. Sacristan.....	9
11. Bell ringers	10
12. Fund Raising Group	10
13. Communications Group	11
14. Electronic Communications/AV usage & plans.....	11
15. Benefice of Langelei Environment Team	11

Finance.....	12
--------------	----

16. Accounts	12
17. Financial Report	15
18. Budget for 2022	16
19. Independent Examiner	17
20. Stewardship Secretary	17

Worship & Study Groups	18
------------------------------	----

21. Sunday School.....	18
22. Messy Church.....	18
23. Thursday Morning Group.....	18
24. Thursday Evening House Group.....	18
25. Prayer for Health & Healing and Study Group	19

Community	19
-----------------	----

26. Baptism Visitors Group	19
27. Marriage Preparation	19
28. Buzzy Bees	19
29. Solo Plus Lunch	20
30. Saturday Community Café	20
31. Christian Aid.....	20
32. Community Comes to Us & We Go to Them	20
33. Covid Community Outreach.....	21
34. Foodbank	21
35. Nash Mills C of E Primary School	23
36. Oxygen Recovery at Nascent House	27
37. The Benefice of Langelei Newsletter	27

Church Hierarchy.....	28
-----------------------	----

38. Team Council	28
39. Deanery Synod	28
40. Report of Deanery Synod proceedings	29

Events	30
--------------	----

41. Bike & Hike.....	30
----------------------	----

Agenda for The Annual Meeting of Parishioners to elect Churchwardens

Sunday 3rd April 2022

Immediately after the 10am service but not before 11am

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last annual meeting of parishioners held on 25th April 2021
3. Election of two Churchwardens

Agenda for The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Sunday 3rd April 2022

Immediately after the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

To be held both in church and on Zoom

1. Apologies for absence
 2. Minutes of the last APCM held on 25th April 2021
 3. Matters arising
 4. To receive the new Electoral Roll
 5. To receive and approve the following reports:
 - a. The Annual Accounts of the Parochial Church Council
 - b. The Report of the Deanery Synod Representatives
 - c. The report of the Secretary of the Parochial Church Council
 - d. The report by the Churchwardens
 - e. Reports from the Groups and Organisations
 6. To appoint an Independent Examiner for the accounts for the coming year
 7. Elections:
 - a. To elect up to three people to serve as Assistant Churchwardens
 - b. To elect three people to the Parochial Church Council for a term of three years
 - c. To elect one person to the Parochial Church Council for a term of two years
 - d. To elect those to serve as Sides people for the coming year
 - e. To co-opt people to the Parochial Church Council.
 8. Any other business
-

St Mary's Apsley End

Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Minutes of meeting 25 April 2021 in church and on Zoom

Started at 11:25

Chair: Revd Richard Howlett, vicar

Secretary: Janet Wright

Present: Susan Rivett, Peter & Rosemary Bladon, Sylvia Low, Harry Graham-Brown, Dan & Fiona Shirley in church plus Jenny Houghton, Keith Bevis, Katharine Harper, Katherine Howlett, Viv Hagel, Sue Jakeman, Marina McKenna and Ann Wiggins on Zoom (total 17)

Apologies: Jean Chrisp, Roger & Angela Witts, Wendy Frampton-Salter, Adrian Whalley, Laura Graham-Brown, Brunhilde Davies, Joy West & Colin Rivett.

Proposed by Seconded by

- 1 The chairman opening the meeting with St Mary's Collect for Growth
- 2 **The minutes of the last meeting** (October 11th 2021) had been received by all members of the PCC at the first PCC meeting. The minutes were approved without dissent.

3 **Election of 2 Churchwardens:**

1. Sylvia Low

Fiona Shirley Lauren Shirley

2. Harry Graham-Brown

Rosemary Vivian Hagel
Bladon

Both approved and elected and agreed to stand.

- 4 Meeting ended at 11:30
-

St Mary's Apsley End

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Minutes v3 of meeting 25 April 2021 in church and on Zoom

Started at 11:30

Chair: Revd Richard Howlett, vicar

Secretary: Janet Wright

Present: Susan Rivett, Peter & Rosemary Bladon, Sylvia Low, Harry Graham-Brown, Dan & Fiona Shirley in church plus Jenny Houghton, Keith Bevis, Katharine Harper, Katherine Howlett, Viv Hagel, Sue Jakeman, Marina McKenna and Ann Wiggins on Zoom (total 17)

Apologies: Jean Chrisp, Roger & Angela Witts, Wendy Frampton-Salter, Adrian Whalley, Laura Graham-Brown, Brunhilde Davies, Joy West & Colin Rivett.

1 **The minutes of the last meeting** (October 11th, 2021) had been received by all members of the PCC (Parochial Church Council) at the first PCC meeting. Minutes approved without dissent.

2 **Matters arising:** None

3 **Revised Electoral Roll:** The electoral roll now stands at 54 members compared to 57 at our last APCM in October 2020. There had been 2 additions & 5 removals since that meeting. This roll which had been posted in the refectory since 4th April 2021 and was available to review was received by this meeting.

4 **Presentation of reports:**

The reports were all accepted as follows:

a. **The Annual accounts of the PCC.** Peter Bladon was thanked for all his work on the finances and accounts. There were no questions.

Proposed: Susan Rivett. Seconded: Sylvia Low

b. **Deanery Synod representatives**

Proposed: Dan Shirley. Seconded: Rosemary Bladon

c. **Secretary of the PCC**

Proposed: Sylvia Low. Seconded: Rosemary Bladon

d. **Churchwardens**

Proposed: Janet Wright. Seconded: Fiona Shirley

e. **Groups and organisations including Safeguarding**

Proposed: Harry Graham-Brown. Seconded: Katharine Harper

f. **Vicar**

Proposed: Vivian Hagel. Seconded: Sue Jakeman

5 Colin Gage was again appointed as the Independent Examiner of the accounts for the coming period up to the next APCM. Our thanks as a parish were expressed to Colin.

Proposed: Rosemary Bladon. Seconded: Harry Graham-Brown

6 **Elections:**

6a To elect up to three people to serve as **Assistant Churchwardens**

- Rosemary Bladon

Proposed: Paul Clark. Seconded: Jim Aylott

- Tim Ward
Proposed: Jim Aylott. Seconded: Paul Clark
- Dan Shirley
Proposed: Rosemary Bladon. Seconded: Janet Wright

All three were elected without dissent.

6b To elect two people to **Parochial Church Council** for a term of three years:

- Tim Ward
Proposed: Peter Bladon. Seconded: Jim Aylott
- Roger Witts
Proposed: Jean Chrisp. Seconded: Tim Ward

Both were elected without dissent.

6c To elect one person to **Parochial Church Council** for a term of two years:

- Dan Shirley
Proposed: Fiona Shirley. Seconded: Peter Bladon

He was elected without dissent.

6d To elect one person to **Parochial Church Council** for a term of one year:

- There were no nominations

6e To elect those to serve as **Sides people** for the coming year:

- Everyone on the Electoral Roll were elected as Sides people
Proposed: Harry Graham-Brown. Seconded: Sue Jakeman

All elected without dissent.

7 AOB:

1. Peter Bladon thanked the working party who have each worked between 4 and 8 hours per week all through the various Covid restrictions (always following government guidelines). He also specifically thanked Jim Aylott who is also the Gift Aid secretary and whose work results in about £8,000 tax being refunded to the church. The meeting acknowledged the huge amount of work that is put in by this group and thanked them.
2. Sylvia Low and Richard Howlett thanked Janet Wright for her work as PCC secretary over the last 2 years and presented her with a beautiful bunch of flowers and a voucher. Janet said that she had enjoyed her time as PCC secretary (it is nice to be at the heart of things) and that she hoped someone would soon step forward to take on at least some of the work. Janet would be happy to help them 'find their feet'.
3. Richard asked for volunteers for the new Risk assessment team. Volunteers were Sylvia Low, Harry Graham-Brown, Dan Shirley, Richard Howlett and it was hoped that Tim Ward would also join.

8 Sylvia Low and Harry Graham-Brown were sworn in as churchwardens by Revd Richard Howlett on behalf of the Bishop of St Albans.

9 Meeting ended at 11:55

Reports

Running the Church

1. Current Vacancy for the Vicar

Sylvia Low

Since the end of September there has been no vicar at St Mary's following the retirement of Rev Richard Howlett. At the Benefice meeting at the beginning of October there was a realisation that the current vision for the Benefice needed to be updated. As a consequence of this, the discussion held at the Informal Vacancy meeting (held on Monday 11th October in the presence of Bishop Michael, Archdeacon Jane, Rural Dean Mike with Rev. Lizzie Hood and Father James MacDonald and members of the PCCs of St Mary's and St Benedict's) the distribution of clergy time within the Benefice was examined with the view to make things clearer for all but especially for prospective candidates for the vacancy.

Therefore, it was proposed that Holy Trinity and All Saints have 100% of a Vicar, and St Mary's and St Benedict's share a Vicar. However, this would mean that the costs of clergy for Holy Trinity and All Saints would increase to 100% (from 75%), St Mary's would remain unchanged at 75% but St Benedict's would have a reduction to 25%. This does not mean that the other clergy within the Benefice will not hold services at either St Benedict's or St Mary's as this will still occur, but it will make it more straightforward and understandable for all.

All PCCs within the Benefice agreed to this change and because of this, the service times at St Mary's and St Benedict's were changed in order that each Church would have their own vicar every Sunday and thus greater continuity. The change of time to 9.30 a.m. from 10 a.m. was announced to the congregation of St Mary's on October 17th, 2021 and their concerns/comments raised at the subsequent extraordinary joint PCC meeting on 21.10.21. The service time change was approved unanimously at this meeting and in January was put into action.

Appointment Process

At the Informal Vacancy meeting the timings for the recruitment process were set out.

- Parish Profile to be completed by mid-December and signed off by St Mary's and St Benedict's PCCs and the Diocese prior to the advert going "live" in January
- Closing date – 10th Feb 2022
- Shortlisting – 21st Feb 2022
- Interview date – 23rd March 2022

Both congregations were asked to provide their positive views of their Parish in order there was a complete picture for our Parish profile. A small group agreed to help to do this with Lizzie and James.

Section 11 Meeting held on Sunday 11th December 2021.

St Mary's PCC signed off the Parish Profile for the advert for the new vicar and appointed Sylvia Low and Wendy Frampton-Salter as lay representatives on the appointment panel.

The Advert for the new vicar was placed on the Diocese of St Albans website at the start of January 2022 and following the shortlisting meeting on 21st February 2022 four candidates were selected for interview on 23rd March 2022. We pray that God will lead the interview panel to the next vicar for St Mary's.

2. Electoral Roll Report

Wendy Frampton-Salter

The electoral roll currently holds 56 members following applications this year. Sadly one member has died.

The electoral roll will be presented at the APCM on 3rd April 2022

Those included on the Church's electoral roll are entitled to stand as and vote to elect representatives for our church council. They are also entitled to act as side persons.

This is done at the annual meeting. The Diocese uses the electoral roll to calculate the Diocesan quote which is paid annually.

3. Churchwardens

Sylvia Low

This year has seen changes at St Mary's with the main one being the unexpected retirement of Rev Richard Howlett at the end of September 2021; he and his wife Katherine had a great send off at his final service in the presence of the Benefice team and other senior clergy from the Deanery. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all they have done for St Mary's over the years and wish them a very happy retirement. Also, in September we welcomed Bishop Alan as he helped us celebrate the 150th anniversary of St Mary's where not only did he provide us with a thought-provoking sermon, he blessed our newly refurbished refectory and he also participated in ringing the bells before the service began!

Until January 2022 we continued to have alternating services between St Mary's and St Benedict's but with Richard's departure decisions were made by the PCCs of both Churches to change service times to enable each Church to have a service every week; St Mary's service time was changed to 9.30 a.m. This time change has resulted in a gradual return to a more "normal" level of attendance at Sunday services although there is still work to do. Another consequence of the interregnum is that both PCCs are having joint meetings with Sylvia being the acting Lay Chair. This has helped our discussions, our preparations, and decisions regarding the recruitment process for our new vicar. As we write we are fortunate to have had six applicants for the position of our new vicar and we pray that God will lead the interview panel to the person who will lead the next chapter in the life of St Mary's.

Many thanks to the many members of the congregation who volunteer to do the many jobs that ensure St Mary's continues to be a place for people to find and develop a growing relationship with God even although this past year has meant that the St Mary's has had to still operate in a very different manner due to the COVID pandemic. Harry and Sylvia would like to say a huge thank you to all the Assistant Churchwardens, Rosemary, Dan and Tim for their work and support over the past year, as well as the PCC and other committees that make St Mary's run smoothly despite the many challenges we have all faced. We would also like to thank Susan for all her hard work on the safeguarding front where she has been supporting both St Mary's and St Benedict's Churches on this aspect of Church life.

In addition, we would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Clare Denny as our PCC secretary and thank her for all her hard work over the year. She has done a great job and has been well-supported by Janet when required.

Throughout the past year we have continued to have our weekly Warden's meetings with Lizzie Hood in place of Richard to review our online services, planning for future services, to deal with urgent matters and many more.

The ongoing pandemic continued to influence how St Mary's operated with streaming of live services on Zoom. We are glad more people are now attending services in person. From September 2021 Messy Church, Sunday School, Saturday Café and Buzzy Bees all resumed their "in person" activities. However, at Christmas due to the effects of the omicron variant of Covid the Crib service was relayed on Zoom; although all other services operated in person with Zoom too.

4. PCC Secretary

Clare Denny

I was asked back in May 2021 if I would like the role of PCC Secretary and I agreed I would take it on, not really knowing what was involved. I am beginning to really enjoy the part I play. I take the minutes at every PCC meeting and circulate these to the PCC members. Since Sylvia Low has become Lay Chair of the PCC we now hold joint PCC meetings with St Benedict's Church (January 2022). It has been good to share ideas and hear about the 2 churches collaborating with fund raising.

The minutes continue to be online and the Google shared drive is a new tool for me, but I am getting the hang of it now. I have set up a dedicated personal email account to cover church information, so I try not to miss anything.

Every year the APCM is booked and I had no idea what this involved so it has been enlightening putting the report together this year but I have really enjoyed it! This year has shown me how much hard work so many people put into the church behind the scenes to make it run seamlessly. Thank you to all who work behind the scenes. I look forward to contributing to that in the future.

5. Safeguarding

Susan Rivett & Katharine Harper

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. There is a statutory requirement by the House of Bishops and the Diocese for a report to be provided and recorded for every PCC meeting. There have been no safeguarding issues reported within this parish over the past year.

The duties of a PSO to oversee safeguarding activity at parish level include:

- Being the link between the Diocese and the Parish
- Support of individuals with a safeguarding concern
- Responding to safeguarding concerns and reporting to the DSA
- Monitoring safeguarding activity within a church
- Implementation of the safeguarding policy
- Provision of a regular report to the PCC

We have six activities registered on the Parish Dashboard; Sunday School, Messy Church, Buzzy Bees, Solo Lunch, Working Party and Bell Ringing. These activities are all required to meet safer recruitment guidelines, have role descriptions, DBS clearance, risk assessments, insurance cover and for 'staff' to meet levels of safeguarding training. DBS checks are completed on all 'job holders' and renewed every five years. The COVID-19 pandemic has required the Church to develop and review social media policies and awareness following the use of Zoom and You Tube for the broadcast of services. This demonstrates the need for constant review of activities, vigilance, and the moving goal posts.

6. Joint Worship Planning Group

Sue Jakeman

The worship planning group have been able to meet via zoom several times over the last year.

We have discussed and planned many different worship services in these meetings to make sure the worship of God matches the church year and festivals as they appear in the calendar.

Events extra to the Liturgical calendar have been discussed and planned, such as "Thy Kingdom come" and the service to celebrate St Mary's 150th birthday with the Bishop of St Albans.

We await the appointment of a new incumbent with prayerfulness and look forward to the next stage of worship planning with whoever answers God's calling to St Mary's, St Benedict's, and the other churches within the benefice.

7. Fabric Committee

Grant Seymour

In a year that has brought so much financial uncertainty, we have been holding off on any major costly projects that we may otherwise have liked to have started. Even so we have still managed to tackle some important jobs and have still had plenty to do.

Wall Repairs After the large amount of work involved with removing the fallen beech tree, we were left with the task of getting the damage to the wall and steps of the railway bridge repaired. This was a significant concern to us at the time due to the damaged step being a trip hazard to the public on a well-used route. We instructed Corinthian Stone to carry out the repair work, who are a trusted contractor we have used previously. The works were carried out in June to a high standard, not only rectifying the tripping hazard but also restoring the ornate features of the wall. Once it has all weathered in, it will be hard to tell that it had previously been turned in to a pile of rubble.

Electrical Safety Inspection St Mary's was due its 5 yearly electrical safety inspection this year. The committee arranged for this to be carried out in May by Greenhills Electric Ltd. Overall the inspection went well with only a few minor actions from the report. These have now been rectified and we can breathe a sigh of relief for another 5 years.

Trees Unfortunately, aging trees in the Churchyard is becoming quite a common problem for us. After significant work and cost to address several tree problems over the last few years, just as we thought we could move on, the recent storms have claimed some large trees within the churchyard which has left sizeable branches stuck and requiring removal by a professional. We have also been monitoring other trees within the Churchyard that have signs of damage

and will require work soon. This work doesn't come cheap and is frustrating that these are all trees that were given a clean bill of health on the tree condition survey we had carried out professionally only a couple of years ago.

OFFICIAL Spire shingles We have continued to monitor the condition of the spire and have lost a few more shingles this year. While there does not seem to be any significant water ingress yet, it is a concern and the spire shingles are getting towards the end of their life expectancy. As I mentioned last year, we must keep this in mind and that a full re-shingle will be needed within the next 5-10 years at best and will be a significant cost that we would struggle to finance.

This year will see the Fabric Committee tackle the raised platform area in front of the war memorial. The plan is to remove the platform and make good the floor area to finish level with the surrounding floor tiles. This would remove a dangerous tripping hazard as well as improving access into and around the Church for all. We will also be working through the tree issues mentioned above and working to maintain the good condition of our Church building. I cannot thank enough the working party, fellow committee members and everyone who plays a part in looking after our Church. Given its age it is very clear for all to see, it is well looked after and that does not happen without the hard work and care from all of you...

8. Monday and Friday Working Parties

Peter Bladon

Both of these working parties have had another busy year, even during the lockdowns we had during 2021. Working to government rules these groups, which continue to be made up members of our own congregation, and some local non church members who continue to play a very active part in the team's work. Throughout the year some members continued to do all those jobs which everybody else takes for granted, grass cutting, general gardening in the churchyard, cleaning, painting, washing, rubbish clearing and general tidying up etc. The list is indeed endless!!

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. Again in 2021 several of our members joined with some volunteers from Bennetts End to help tidy the grounds at St Benedict's.

We did draw up a plan in February to develop the churchyard to encourage its wildlife and more details concerning this will soon be appearing on the church notice boards. So please do have a look at the plans, and if you can, help achieve its aims!!

We do have a list of work that we are aiming to do, which the group review each year and update. We have started having our normal cups of coffee and biscuits or even homemade cake! again and have a couple of new members join the group but would welcome some younger members. Meanwhile many thanks to those of you who come on a Monday and Friday mornings and give of their time and talents to help look after the church and churchyard.

9. Servers

Jim Aylott

Because of the virus and having to keep to social distancing rules we are not using the main Altar. We are also using Zoom online to stream our services which can't be done from the main Altar.

We moved the small Altar from its normal position and placed it on the diocese step. By doing this it gives the servers no room to move. We can't stand in front of the Altar because we block the view of the camera and we have no room at the side of the Altar to stand and we should not be positioned behind the Priest at the back of the Altar. It is therefore impossible to continue to serve at the Altar, so our services are no longer required at this present time.

One hopes when life goes back to normal and this virus is over, we will be able to return to our normal duties to serve at the Altar as we once did before.

10. Sacristan

Jim Aylott

I would like to thank all the members of the congregation who donated their unwanted candles to me in the past year I am very grateful for this. It does make a big saving on my budget. On Maundy Thursday, the church was stripped of its fixtures and fittings. We do this each year. These items were placed in the vestry for safe keeping and a year on they are still in the vestry. Because of this there are limited candles to light for our services. We are currently not taking communion wine due to the pandemic.

I ended the year with a surplus amount on my budget.

I regularly change the liturgical colours when required and I continue to clean the silver. The Thurible is cleaned on Monday mornings. When we go back to normal times, I hope to rehouse these items back in the Church and I look forward to resuming our customary style of service once more.

11. Bell ringers

Brian Watson
Tower Captain and Steeple keeper

With the lockdown during the earlier part of the year and the continuing Covid-19 restrictions we were unable to ring the bells normally. When the restrictions eased, we started Sunday service ringing in May and practices in June under the following conditions.

1. Only six ringers in the tower.
2. Windows and ringing chamber door open.
3. Wearing of masks.
4. Use of hand sanitiser before and after handling the ropes.
5. Social distancing.

As the restrictions eased further all the ringers could ring together and other ringers were invited to join us when we were short of ringers. However, we set a maximum of ten people in the tower at any one time. Currently we are ringing without masks but continue with ventilation and hand sanitiser.

During the period when there was no ringing there were two occasions when a bell was rung. The first occasion was on Tuesday 23rd March, the National Day of Reflection, when the fifth bell was rung 126 times, one stroke for each 1000 lives lost to Covid at that time. The second occasion was the death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh when the tenor was tolled 99 times half-muffled.

Bishop Alan visited the tower and rang with us on the Sunday morning of the celebrations for the 150th anniversary. Later the same day we rang a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor.

One other quarter peal was rung during the year, Doubles in November for the Western District quarter peal weekend.

We also rang for the service on Christmas Day.

12. Fund Raising Group

Vivian Hagel

As we began 2021 many restrictions were still in place, so we decided not to arrange events until later in the year.

Planning then took place to celebrate **St Mary's 150th Anniversary**. A group was formed to organise this event which then took place over the weekend 11th and 12th September.

We began selling raffle tickets, planning games, stalls, and other activities. On the Saturday 11th September visitors could see a slide show about the history of the church, enjoy various games outside, purchase raffle tickets, plants and church memorabilia and of course sample the refreshments with a BBQ as well. Music was also provided by David and Melanie. The celebrations continued on Sunday with Bishop Alan leading our service, then blessing our newly refurbished refectory and then cutting a specially made cake by Gemma.

This was an enjoyable occasion and many thanks go to all who attended and those who worked so hard to plan and help over this memorable weekend.

In November we held an Autumn Fair instead of our Christmas Bazaar. This was on a smaller scale but again was a well-supported and fun event.

The next event that we were delighted to be involved in again was the **RCHH Santa Sleigh**. Leaflets were delivered along the route before our outing on 30th November. This year the sleigh was static for an hour in Apsley lock then we completed the route around the Belswains Lane area. Many thanks go to Bob from St Benedict's, Peter, Rosemary, Susan, Colin and me on what was a really enjoyable outing. We have since received a payment for £350 for our two churches.

We are about to plan an event to commemorate the Queens platinum jubilee along with other events for the rest of the year.

13. Communications Group

Laura Graham-Brown

The communications group has worked hard in the past year on the electronic methods of communication. The website has been restructured and has been an important resource for people checking on when and where services were especially when we were alternating between churches and switching between virtual and in-person. Huge thanks to Marina and Janet for their hard work.

The bulletin creators have not stopped their hard work and adapting to a joint bulletin and now back to just St Mary's bulletin. Thank you to the team and thank you to those who supply the notices. The emails and Facebook posts have kept us all in touch which proved to be very effective when we closed the church due to the electrical fault and moved the service.

It's great to be back in church and returning to look at some of the projects we paused during lockdown such as the welcome leaflets and we look forward to making plans with our new vicar when they are appointed.

14. Electronic Communications/AV usage & plans

Harry Graham-Brown

The services at St Mary's and St Benedict's have continued to be recorded and broadcast while we alternated between the 2 churches. Since January when the 2 churches now have their own services each week, we have continued to Broadcast the service held at St Mary's. Dan and Harry are grateful of the congregation's support when the technology does not want to behave.

The work to get a purpose-built sound and vision system is still progressing, we have a quote, for the system, electrical work and hopefully by the time you read this the alarm move. We need an additional quote for the main system.

The next steps will be to start applying for grants and permissions.

If you are interested in either helping us run the current system or helping us move forward on the new system, please let Dan or Harry know.

15. Benefice of Langelei Environment Team

Cathy Ayling

The Benefice of Langelei Environment Team has met frequently to share ideas in line with the General Synod's response to climate change and the target for Churches to become net zero carbon by 2030. There are Bronze, Silver and Gold Eco Awards which we need to work towards to become Eco Churches.

There are many ways that we can all make a difference to reduce the carbon emissions by making small changes to our lifestyles which we aim to promote within our churches led by worship, within the community by setting good examples, and leading conversations in our various groups within the church. We aim to share ideas in the Benefice newsletter giving positive, achievable ways to change to alternative low carbon use.

Lizzie and I attended the Dacorum Climate Action Network meeting in the Forum at Hemel Hempstead. Hertfordshire appears to be one of the most pro-active Counties in the country and has a planned agenda for the future including 76 more electric car charging points, future housing to be eco, and many other ideas.

We will continue to share ideas and information within all four churches to help to save our wonderful planet from the devastation climate change is causing.

If you have ideas or would like to be involved in the team, please speak to Tim Ward, your St Mary's rep.

Finance

16. Accounts

Peter Bladon
Treasurer

<u>ST MARY'S CHURCH ACCOUNTS</u>			
<u>Bank Reconciliations</u>			
			Nat
			West
			Value £
Bank statement as at 31st December 2021			33320.23
	Ref Nos		Value £
Unpresented cheques			
	Date of cheque		
B.Ayling	8/12/21	2788	5.00
Mrs.E.Clark	8/12/21	2792	5.00
P.C.C. All Saints	19/12/21	2797	266.75
Bruce Boardman	25/12/21	2794	60.00
			336.75
Unbanked income			
Total			32983.48
Cash Book Balance Nat West			32983.48
Difference			0.00

ST MARY'S BALANCE SHEET							December	
	Ledger		Accrued		Transfer		Profit/Loss	
	Debit	Credit	Debit	Credit	Debit	Credit	Debit	Credit
General Fund								
Collections in Church		2080.05						2080.05
Pledged Giving (Stewardship)		28414.46						28414.46
Donations - Gift Aid		5015.51						5015.51
Donations - Non Gift Aid		384.62						384.62
Donations - Use of Church Facilities		312.00						312.00
200 Club Donation		0.00				473.00		473.00
Inland Revenue Tax Recovered		8370.27						8370.27
Fees	0.00	2502.00						2502.00
Special Events	202.24	3600.97						3398.73
Special Collections - Charities	400.05	400.05					400.05	400.05
Buzzy Bees	0.00	0.00					0.00	0.00
Solo Lunch		0.00						0.00
Organist Fund								0.00
Contras	0.00	0.00						0.00
Clergy Expenses	1159.93	902.87					257.06	
Organists	900.00						900.00	
Repairs & Renewals	848.15						848.15	
Heat, Light & Water	3608.44						3608.44	
Insurance	1995.09						1995.09	
Sacristy	315.80						315.80	
Administration	652.07						652.07	
Diocesan Common Fund (Quota)	42963.00						42963.00	
Benefice Administrator	3659.00						3659.00	0.00
Fund Raising		309.41			309.41			0.00
Fabric Fund								
Fabric Fund Fees & Donations		0.00						0.00
Fabric Fund Grants		0.00						0.00
Fabric Fund Interest CBF Funds		0.00						0.00
Fabric Fund Expenditure	6372.20						6372.20	
Fabric Fund Capital - Gift Aid		6378.37						6378.37
Fabric Fund Capital - Non Gift Aid		0.00					0.00	0.00
Wootton Bequest	4151.44	3956.78			3200.00		7351.44	3956.78
Fabric Fund Capital - Tax		0.00						0.00
Education Fund	0.00	22.00					0.00	22.00
Churchyard Fund	88.63	228.71					88.63	228.71
Donation Fund	2684.22	2167.56					2684.22	2167.56
Ward Bequest	0.00	17000.00					0.00	17000.00
Choir Fund	0.00	0.00					0.00	0.00
200 Club Fund	730.00	1235.00			473.00		1203.00	1235.00
Organist Fund	0.00	754.00					0.00	754.00
Bequest(Wootton Fund)						3200.00		3200.00
Fund Raising	0.00	0.00				309.41		309.41
Reserves as at 1st January 2021		56598.69						
National Westminster Bank	19698.33							
Central Board of Finance	36900.36							
Total	127328.95	56598.69	0.00	0.00	3982.41	3982.41	73298.15	86602.52
Balances (credit=profit - debit=loss)	70730.26		0.00		0.00		-13304.37	
Check							-13304.37	
Monthly Income and Expenditure	Income	Expenditure	Net	Notes				
January	4513.89	1966.85	2547.04					
February	3129.45	2048.30	1081.15					
March	14148.35	6553.49	7594.86					
April	7658.42	6585.08	1073.34					
May	6113.90	2100.89	4013.01					
June	2804.19	15585.14	-12780.95					
July	5375.29	1269.10	4106.19					
August	3307.84	7410.43	-4102.59					
September	21261.49	2427.29	18834.20					
October	4814.10	8540.23	-3726.13					
November	6822.57	5848.99	973.58					
December	4085.14	10394.47	-6309.33					
Total	84034.63	70730.26	13304.37					

ST MARY'S CHURCH - APSLEY END						
FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR		31-Dec-21	12			
		Actuals		Budget for 12 months		Actual for 2020
INCOME :		£		£		£
General Fund						
General Collections		2,080.05		2,060.00		1,597.34
Pledged Giving		28,414.46		28,000.00		27,629.24
Tax Refunds		8,370.27		6,000.00		8,656.07
Fees		2,502.00		1,500.00		1,257.00
150 Celebrations/Autumn Fair/Bike Ride		3,398.73		3,500.00		2,152.24
Special Collections		400.05		500.00		210.00
Donation 200 Club		473.00		700.00		736.00
Donations -General		5,400.13		8,000.00		7,010.00
Donations - Use of Church Facilities		312.00		1,000.00		319.00
Organist Sponsorship		754.00		500.00		178.50
Fund Raising		309.41		700.00		650.38
Wootton Grant		3,200.00		4,500.00		8,250.00
General Fund Total		55,614.10	0.00	56,960.00		58,645.77
Fabric Fund General						
Income & Interest on CBF Account		6,378.37				
Fabric Fund General Total			6,378.37			
Education Fund						
Churchyard Fund		22.00	22.00			
Donation Fund		228.71	228.71			
Benefice Newsletter		2,167.56	2,167.56			
Choir Fund		0.00	0.00			
200 Club		0.00	0.00			
Solo Lunch		1,235.00	1,235.00			
Wootton Bequest		0.00	0.00			
Ward Bequest		3,956.78	3,956.78			
Buzzy Bees		17,000.00	17,000.00			
Fund Raising		0.00	0.00			
Total		86,602.52				
EXPENDITURE :						
General Fund Total						
Clergy Expenses		257.06	700.00			344.01
Organist		900.00	1,000.00			960.00
Repairs and Maintenance		848.15	600.00			601.20
Utilities		3,608.44	4,000.00			3,756.85
Insurance		1,995.09	2,000.00			2,213.63
Sacristy		315.80	500.00			492.74
Administration		652.07	800.00			866.52
Diocesan Parish Share		42,963.00	43,406.00			45,543.00
Parish Administrator		3,659.00	3,454.00			3,616.00
Special Collections		400.05	500.00			210.00
General Fund Total		55,598.66	56,960.00			58,603.95
General Fund Total						
Fabric Fund General		6,372.20	6,372.20			
Education Fund		0.00	0.00			
Churchyard Fund		88.63	88.63			
Donation Fund		2,684.22	2,684.22			
Benefice Newsletter		0.00	0.00			
Choir Fund		0.00	0.00			
200 Club		1,203.00	1,203.00			
Organist Fund		0.00	0.00			
Buzzy Bees		0.00	0.00			
Bequest (Fabric Fund)		7,351.44	7,351.44			
Total Expenditure		73,298.15				
Balance sheet as at 31st December 2021						
ASSETS :						£
Central Board of Finance Deposit Account						36,919.58
Nat West Bank Account						32,983.48
TOTAL						69,903.06
REPRESENTED BY SOURCES OF FUNDS AS FOLLOWS :						
	31-Dec-20	Income	Expenditure	Profit/(Loss)	31-Dec-21	
General Fund	41.92	55,614.10	55,598.66	15.44	57.36	
Restricted Accounts						
Fabric Fund	(37.07)	6,378.37	6,372.20	6.17	(30.90)	
Education Fund	443.33	22.00	0.00	22.00	465.33	
Churchyard Fund	26.89	228.71	88.63	140.08	166.97	
Donation Fund	2,719.36	2,167.56	2,684.22	(516.66)	2,202.70	
Solo Lunch	252.60	0.00	0.00	-	252.60	
Choir Fund	453.59	0.00	0.00	-	453.59	
200 Club Fund	1,302.18	1,235.00	1,203.00	32.00	1,334.18	
Buzzy Bees Fund	620.92	0.00	0.00	-	620.92	
Fund Raising	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Designated Accounts						
Ward Bequest	0.00	17,000.00	0.00	17,000.00	17,000.00	
Wootton Bequest	50,774.97	3,956.78	7,351.44	(3,394.66)	47,380.31	
TOTAL	56,598.69	86,602.52	73,298.15	13,304.37	69,903.06	
Signed P.J.Bladon	11th January 2022					
Charities supported in 2021 through church or special appeals						
	Church				Appeals	Total
	£				£	£
Bishop's Harvest Appeal	230.68					230.68
Christian Aid					169.37	169.37
	230.68				169.37	400.05

17. Financial Report

Peter Bladon
Treasurer

2021 was again a difficult year for the financial aspects of the church, and indeed without support from the Wootton Bequest we would have ended the year with a loss of over **£3,200**.

Looking at the income side, pledged giving was £414 up on budget. However, the biggest loss during the year was on general collections and general donations (blue envelopes) which were down £2,580 on budget. We again lost a few of our pledged giving members during the year. The SumUp machine brought in some funds but was affected by the fact that we had about half of our normal services in church, had only had three weddings, and fewer funerals and baptisms during the year.

The tax refunds we received through the gift aid scheme came in over budget by £2,370, (many thanks to Jim Aylott for all his hard work in this area) and the Fees account came in £1,000 above budget. The Autumn Fair, Bike Ride and 150 Celebrations, with a great deal of hard work by a handful of people came in £102 below budget. Donations for the use of the Refectory came in down £688 against budget. The '200' Club was able to raise £473 which was down against budget by £186. £309 was raised by general fund raising i.e. Pancake Evening, Scavenger Hunt, Christmas Raffle, Cake Sale. The Organist donations/sponsorship was up against budget by £254, and many thanks must go to all those who sponsored during the year. We continue to look for support in this area during 2022 as we return to singing in church once again.

However, it is important to point out that (as already mentioned) the bequest donation of **£3,200** (approved by the P.C.C. against a budget of £4,500) covered the loss for the year to balance the books.

So overall our total income was only £1,346 down against budget.

The total expenditure was down **£1,362** 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 87% (£48,222) in respect of our Diocesan Parish Share, clergy expenses, organist and Benefice administrator. As you can see from the balance sheet we have a small reserve amount in the general fund.

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.

We had a no reserves in the **Fabric Fund** at the end of 2021.

The **Education Fund** has benefited from income from Messy Church of £22 during 2021 but most meetings have been held on zoom, so this has reduced income. There was no expenditure claimed for in 2021.

The **Churchyard Fund** has benefited from the £30 from the War Graves and some smaller donations giving an income of £228. £88 was paid out for oil and petrol for the mowers/strimmer's and general maintenance of machines, making a surplus during the year of over £140.

The Donation Fund - This fund received grants from Hertfordshire CC, a Mission Grant from the Diocese, and the Deanery and ended up with a net loss over the year of £516. Also, we did receive a donation from the Rotary Club of £400 (£100 of which we passed onto St Benedict's) for our participation in the Santa Sleigh collection in 2020. The **Solo Lunch** balance at the end of 2021 (of £252) had not changed due to no lunches being held during 2021. As already mentioned, the '**200**' Club generated £473 to support the general fund, as well as paying out some lucky winners! My thanks go to Tim Ward who runs the club, and to all who support this important fundraising scheme. New members are always welcome!

The **Buzzy Bees** have not met for most of the year, and their balance remains at £620.

The **Fund Raising** for the year came to £309 and covered four events (mentioned above) and went to support the General Account. Many thanks to all who ran these events, and to those who supported them.

It is important to note that the following Bequests for accounting reasons are clarified as 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 an Insurance Claim of £1,800 in respect of damage caused by a fallen tree. Grant from the Vicar and Churchwardens account of £1,800 in respect of the fallen tree, and interest.

Ward Bequest This is a new bequest of £17,000 in 2021 from the estate of Peter Ward. At present the P.C.C. have not confirmed how this bequest will be used.

At the present time these accounts are the only reserves that the P.C.C. have control of to cover any loss on other accounts.

The budget for the 2022 General Fund is attached to these reports. This shows we are faced with a deficit on the general account of **£2,700**. Hopefully, in 2022, as the effects of the COVID -19 virus ease we should be in a better position for some of our fundraising events to take place!

My thanks go to Colin Gage, our Independent Examiner, and to the weekly support of Jim Aylott, our Stewardship Secretary.

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. This is especially true for those members who increased their financial support during 2021. Please keep this in your prayers, and thoughts over the coming months. If you can start or increase your giving it will all help support the work of the church.

18. Budget for 2022

Financial Group
January 2022

ST MARY'S APSLEY END, PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2022

<u>INCOME</u>	£
Collections in Church	2,541
Pledged Giving (Stewardship)	28,000
Donations – Gift Aid	6,000
Donations - Use of Church Facilities	1,000
Tax recovered through Gift Aid	6,000
Fees	2,500
Christmas Bazaar	4,000
200 Club	480
Special Collections	400
Fund Raising	700
Organist Sponsorship	500
Income deficit	<u>2,700</u>
Total Income	£54,421

EXPENDITURE

Clergy Expenses	500
Repairs & Renewals	700
Utilities	4,000
Insurance	2,000
Sacristy	400
<i>Administration</i>	<i>700</i>
<i>Parish Administrator</i>	<i>3,473</i>
Diocesan Common Fund (Parish Share)	41,248
Organist	1,000
Special Collections	<u>400</u>
Total Expenditure	£54,421

Notes

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

19. Independent Examiner

Colin Gage

Independent Examiner

Independent Examiner's Report to the members of St Mary's Church, Apsley End, Parochial Church Council.

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2021 which are set out on page 1.

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:

- examine the accounts (under section 43 of the Act),
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity
- Commission (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act) and
- 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

During my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act, and
 - 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 to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: Colin Gage, Independent Examiner

Dated: February 2022

20. Stewardship Secretary

Jim Aylott

About 80% of the membership pay is by bank standing order. By doing this the Church is guaranteed donations and without this income our losses would have been a lot bigger. Of this group only two members are unaccounted for.

On the envelopes group we had only 3 members who kept up their payments. The rest are unaccountable or only occasionally came to Church, so income from this is down on the previous year.

The other income is gift aid. This held its own against last year's income and the reason for that was that the Church received a one-off gift of five thousand pounds. The collection for the year is poor compared with last year and that includes the machine which sits there waiting to be used.

The items I would like to raise are:

Missing members

Church closure every other Sunday

Lack of special services

We have a vacancy of a Priest so we lost the consistency of our Sunday Services.

Missing members is a problem. Currently we do not have answers as to why we continue to have missing members.. This could be due to Covid.

The Church was being closed every other week, and when re-opened, social distancing and a restricted number of parishioners attending (18 people maximum) meant a reduction in numbers. Booking in advance may have put some people off from coming to church and perhaps the removal of refreshments at the end of the service may have contributed. All of this put together cost a loss of revenue. It has been a difficult year for the Church.

We have now started our Sunday services weekly again with no restrictions and this will bring back the consistency we much need

Before the virus, our communion complement was between 45 to 52 people sharing the body of Christ. Presently it's between 18 to 22 people so our congregation is reduced in comparison to previous years. One hopes when we receive our new Priest our unaccounted members will return and our congregation will grow in size but I say most Churches are struggling with its congregation numbers since the virus started as a lot of people have not returned to Church.

Worship & Study Groups

21. Sunday School

Peter Bladon

Our Sunday School has continued over the last year but mainly by Zoom and following the 10am service. Although from the beginning of 2022 we are now meeting during the service in the refectory. Over 2021 the number of children and adults attending ranged from 4-12. I continued to send out to families, worksheets, wordsearches and colouring sheets by email each week which allowed them to follow the weekly readings and for them to use at home and share with us all on Sunday. Some of these drawings etc then find their way onto the Sunday School board at Church. We have, over the last year, continued to show most Sundays the video that the Diocese has produced which again follows the readings.

Some of the Sunday School members took part in the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. Even though we were all on Zoom special thanks must go to those, as we brought the Christmas story to life.

As we move further into 2022 we are hoping to welcome more of our members and their parents back into Church to join with us all each Sunday, meanwhile I would like to thank our more senior members who have supported, and attended Sunday School on a weekly basis over the last year as well as the small team of teachers.

22. Messy Church

Laura Graham-Brown

Messy church continued throughout lockdown by using Zoom. Craft bags were delivered on the Saturday ready for Messy Church via zoom on the Sunday. October 2021 was our first in person Messy church and we had activities and worship in the church. At our November 2021 service we added back in the baked potatoes supper after the worship. Due to the Omicron variant of Covid 19 being so active we cancelled our December service.

2022 started well with our 9th birthday in January and the ever-popular wooden railway making a return to show the long journey for Mary and Joseph escaping to Egypt.

23. Thursday Morning Group

Melanie Henley

The Thursday morning bible study group meets weekly from 10.15 to approximately 11.30 in the Refectory. We usually have a break during August and over Christmas and Easter time. Currently, Father James McDonald joins us once a month, usually on the first Thursday of the month. We begin with some tea or coffee. It is a friendly and informal group of around 7 people and we always enjoy lively, frank, challenging and very interesting discussions based on the bible passages being studied each week. It is a very good way to learn more about the scriptures and to engage with friends from the community, why not come along and join us? Everyone welcome!

24. Thursday Evening House Group

Laura Graham-Brown

We have met virtually throughout lockdown concentrating on providing pastoral support for each other and a chance to catch up. In Advent we looked at Art in Advent as an informal study. We have 7 regular members of the house group.

25. Prayer for Health & Healing and Study Group

Sue Jakeman

Sadly because of the on-going Covid situation that the whole country found itself in again, this group has not been able to meet in Viv's house, as was the format of this group.

We are hopeful that the group will be able to meet together again in the not-too-distant future.

We have had to say "goodbye" to one member of the group, Katherine Howlett and we pray for both Katherine and Richard to enjoy better health and healing in their retirement.

Community

26. Baptism Visitors Group

Peter Bladon

Mainly due to the pandemic we only had six baptisms at St Mary's during the last year, however the three baptism teams continued to do their work in visiting and supporting those families who brought their children for baptism. The first meetings on a Saturday morning with the families continued, when the visitors got to know both the children and their families, and a video was shown so that the service itself could be understood. This was followed (when government regulations allowed) with a visit to the homes of the families by the visitors, to talk them through the service itself and answer any questions.

We also had meetings with all the visitors jointly with the All Saints teams when any new baptisms could be discussed, and visitors allocated to each family. Once the new vicar is in post, we will be reviewing what we do and offer in this area and hopefully be able to bring more children and their families into the life of St Mary's. Meanwhile, many thanks to the visitors for their Stewardship in this area as we bring Gods word to those seeking to have their children baptised.

27. Marriage Preparation

This year there was no group activity on this due to the pandemic.

28. Buzzy Bees

Lilian Hepwood

Yet another difficult year for group meetings because of Covid. However, in September 2021 we enthusiastically, if warily, restarted Buzzy Bees again and had a very encouraging response from our babies and toddlers with lots of new faces joining us. Our meetings went very well though we had to limit our numbers to 15 children to make good use of space. Everyone was pleased to be able to meet up with people again.

At the end of term, we had a very successful Christmas Party. It was great fun for everyone with party food, balloons, bubbles, bells and pretend snowball fights. The toddlers loved the visit from Rosemary and Peter as Father and Mrs Christmas. They also had a short session in church learning about the Christmas story.

However, 2022 started off badly with an increased Covid risk so unfortunately, we closed down until February. It was very encouraging to see all our members return, however. We've been very pleased to welcome new helpers Ann Wiggins and Julie Burgess.

We're all looking forward to this year with lots of events to look forward to. We will soon be having Easter activities, an egg hunt and a party (hopefully outdoor) to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. We hope to have an outing before the summer holidays to Gadebridge Park (weather permitting!). We hope there will now be a gradual return to normality.

29. Solo Plus Lunch

Joy West

This year, we have been unable to enjoy regular monthly lunches in the refectory. However, I have kept in touch with the group by phone. As we are mainly older members of the congregation, sadly our numbers have reduced again this year.

In March, I hope that we will be able to enjoy a simple Lent lunch in the refectory. This is a chance for all the St Mary's community to meet together with the solo plus lunch group.

I feel that, in the spring, it will be time to return to monthly lunches. Hopefully, we can become more inclusive and welcome others from the wider community. Any help would be much appreciated.

30. Saturday Community Café

Peter Bladon

During last year this outreach to our local community has continued to take place by zoom. However, the contact with various visitors including walkers, visiting bell-ringers and people visiting the area has not taken place. However, since January this year the normal opening on a Saturday has started again, and indeed this means that families bringing their children to be baptised have the chance to meet other members of the congregation, as well as the baptism visitors and enjoy some refreshments.

Since January, we have returned to our normal opening times, with the church open between 10 -12 noon every Saturday, and with the chance for people to come in for a time of quiet prayer, as well as enjoying the high quality of refreshments including those homemade cakes once again!!

My thanks go to all those who have continued to run and support the Saturday mornings over the last difficult 2 years, and remember you could always come along to join us for our Sunday worship at 9.30am as well! Just check the St Mary's website for details. See you all in person soon!!

31. Christian Aid

Rosemary Bladon

This year once again we were not able to have a café with cakes etc due to the circumstances! but just a collecting box for Christian Aid, for the few people who came to church. This raised £169.37 so thank you to those – and maybe we will be able to do better this coming year.

32. Community Comes to Us & We Go to Them

Rosemary Bladon

The heading for this is "Community comes to us and we to them –" but in fact we weren't able to have any "come to us" due to Covid, but I did manage to deliver bulletins to the ladies at Florence Longman House every week – and sometimes managed to see them and have a chat too!

We didn't have any Carol Singing but did manage to do a stint on the Santa Sleigh and raised £350 and £100 for St Benedict's. For the first time this year Father Christmas and his driver were asked to meet at the Marina so that people could take photos before the sleigh started on its travels.

On Christmas Eve we again had the Christmas Story and the figures being placed in the Crib – by Zoom – with people joining and we did have Carol Singing!

We didn't run our usual size Christmas Bazaar in mid-November- due to limits on people allowed but we did have a smaller "Autumn Fair" and managed to raise £1929.

As our St Mary's reached 150 years – on 31st August – we invited the Bishop of St Albans to come to celebrate with us – so he came on 12th September. We had a special cake, raffle, some stalls and games and raised £1,000.

We had a lovely sunny day for Easter Day -seems a long time ago! but Helen Brewer and Gemma Wiggins ran an Easter Trail and Raffle and raised £309 and we thank them and all those who came.

33. Covid Community Outreach

Janet Wright

In July 2021 the PCC agreed to wind up this project for the following reasons:

- We had had no requests for help since Feb 2021
- 3 of the 4 people involved with the admin/running of the project had all moved away from Apsley!

History:

At the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, and with the support of Community Action Dacorum (CAD) we set up a team of volunteers to reach out as a church to the local community in practical ways.

More than 25 people (from both inside and outside our church communities) expressed an interest in helping in different capacities, though not all of them were prepared to go through the vetting & ID process and so not all stuck with us.

We also secured some funding from our local County Councillor, Tina Howard's discretionary fund.

There were anything between 0 and 3 requests per week, mostly for shopping, but some for 'chats'. This proved manageable by our team of around 20 volunteers (9 of whom were willing/able to do shopping and had been cleared by CAD).

Overall, we had 48 individual requests over the time we were active (there may have been a few more that did not get 'logged').

It felt good to be able to assist people in these difficult times as well as projecting our churches into our communities. I am very grateful to all the volunteers for their support.

As there was no longer a need for the sort of support we had offered:

- I contacted all the volunteers to tell them we were winding it up & to thank them for their support
- I cancelled the phone & text systems I had previously set up
- We allocated the roughly £150 funds remaining to other community work in the church e.g. the Food Bank.

34. Foodbank

Jackie Lintern

Goal: To provide non-perishable foods and other household goods to those covered by the Benefice of Langelei community who do not always have the means to purchase it themselves. Note: No financial donations are accepted. Unlike other food banks in the area (e.g. Trussell Trust & Watford Food Bank), we do not require any users to produce a food voucher issued by the local council offices. Therefore, beneficiaries are able to maintain anonymity and the ability to use the support either occasionally or more regularly without judgement. This is the premise on which the original food bank was started.

Where donations received have not been taken up by our users and might be approaching their use-by date, they are passed on to DENS once per month, following a sorting process by one of our All Saints volunteers.

We are keen to be able to promote the food bank as a community activity, rather than being Church-led. We believe that this would encourage others who need to use the facility, but do not feel comfortable entering Church premises, or think that they are not allowed if they are not Church-goers themselves. This approach is supported by Fr James McDonald.

The food bank operates from 3 locations:

All Saints Church, Kings Langley – open daily with stocks replenished by volunteers Mon-Fri

St Mary's Church, Apsley – open Thursday with stocks replenished by volunteers, but with access to users whenever the church doors are unlocked for other activities

St Benedict's Church, Bennett's End – open Wednesday with stocks replenished by volunteers

Source of Donations:

Local parishioners who leave contributions at All Saints and St Benedict's. Fewer donations come directly to St Mary's from individuals.

Watford Food Bank, usually every 2 weeks with contents dependent on their own donation sources and "client" needs. Through 1H 2021 they delivered to each location, but were unable to continue separate deliveries from 4Q '21

(shortage of drivers/Covid restrictions). Single delivery to All Saints continued and our volunteers at All Saints took receipt, sorted and delivered on to both St Mary's and St Benedict's.

Dunhelm (Apsley). Customers leave donations in a box near the exit and one of our Apsley volunteers collects when required.

Camelot Rugby Club (H/Hempstead): chocolate bar treats at Christmas 2021.

Kings Langley Football Club: Fr James McDonald was approached by the Outreach Contact at the club, as they wished to become more involved in the community. Successful collections were made from them between October and December 2021, with the prospect of re-instating the club member donations again around September 2022.

Special Activities:

Easter 2021: Easter eggs were collected then distributed to local children in the community, to families via social workers and to local care homes. There was some concern that a proportion of the eggs were removed from the church without permission, even during the course of a service. As a result, consideration will be given during the Easter 2022 activity, to decide when to put out the eggs for each location, depending on their opening times. Despite this, it was considered a successful event.

Christmas 2021: Christmas Shoeboxes were donated by various sources. This activity was managed in association with another contact working with the Bennett's End Community Centre. A total of 130 boxes were collected, including 40 "Pyjama and Present" boxes from the Community Centre. These were distributed around the local population, other churches, via social workers and one of our own volunteers, as well as to a local women's refuge.

Open Topics:

Additional volunteers for each location: Our Communications volunteer posts occasional FB messages, as well as preparing more specific articles for local newsletters and village magazines, to report on any special events. These always include a request for anybody interested in adding their volunteering support. This has resulted in two new volunteers at St Benedict's, who have replaced the original church-linked supporters (now both unable to continue due to personal circumstances).

Potential location changes for each food bank: In order to encourage the wider community and extend the potential for both usage and diversity of volunteers, we believe that finding alternative locations would be good. However, these still need to be in easily accessible sites, especially for access by less able-bodied users. Current discussions include the Bennett's End Community Centre, with the local support of a contact working with them already. This might allow the food bank to be opened more often. A potential timing is still unclear and would need the buy-in of the staff on site. These activities will be picked up again around or after Easter. For All Saints, we are aware of a building at the top of Meadowbank (behind the church). This seems to be unoccupied. We will try to follow up on the suitability of this as an alternative Kings Langley option during 2022.

No other location has been identified in Apsley so far.

Control of stocks/potential pilfering: Each location has experienced the loss of some donations, where they have been put out for the public, but a single individual has taken advantage and removed all of the most coveted items, or even a whole shelf-full of products. This usually happens when our volunteers are not able to attend, but not exclusively. It is difficult for them to approach some of these people to remind them that they should leave enough for others, too. We have added "Take only what you need" signs, which has helped. Another suggestion was made to discourage this by setting up a fake CCTV camera in a corner of the food bank area (particularly at St Mary's). As our users generally wish to remain unknown, this might be enough to deter some of them. We are waiting to know if this might be possible, as it would involve obtaining permission from the Church authorities. Meanwhile, the more desirable products are taken away from the shelves by our volunteers at St Mary's at the end of their Thursday visits, as an interim solution.

Development of recipe cards: Some donations (eg, tins of chick peas) are less popular with users. We believe this could be through lack of knowledge on how to cook/use them effectively and have discussed the idea of creating simple recipe cards to leave with the foods. This will be followed up in 2022.

It is our intention moving forward to become as inclusive as possible and involve more community members as volunteers and donors. However, we are all aware that everybody is a volunteer and has other personal commitments, so our progress and development will not always be as rapid as we would wish. Also, the current cost-of-living increases will be affecting everyone and we will have to work hard to retain any regular donations, as they are spread thinner and wider.

35. Nash Mills C of E Primary School

Allan Maher
Headteacher



Annual Report from Nash Mills CofE Primary School

February 2022



It seems like an awfully long time since I last reported to you all! A huge amount has happened in school, and we are very proud of the progress that has been made despite several challenges. We are expecting a visit from both OFSTED and SIAMS within the next 12 months and hope that, due to the work completed, we are less vulnerable than we

were previously and will be able to really show all the fantastic work that has been done in school to ensure that our children receive the very best.

COVID has continued to have a significant impact within school. We have had times in the past term when over a third of our staff have been isolating. As well as making it difficult to continue our normal operation, this also has had a significant financial impact in terms of cover and supply.

Due to the size and lack of ventilation in three of our classrooms, I did bid for government-funded air purifying units, which were delivered at the start of February. As of half term and in line with national trends, infection rates have drastically reduced in school which will allow us to come back together again for worship for the remainder of the spring term. I hope that this is the start of the virus being more controlled within our community.



Regarding school organisation, numbers remain very stable; 227 pupils on role, with most classes being full and currently 21 children in our Nursery. We have just processed the applications for pupils to start in Reception in September 2022 and had 92 applications for our 30 places; 8 of these were under the Church rule. Needless to say, the school retains its strong reputation within the local community.

Quality of Education

We have continued to develop the curriculum offered throughout the school to ensure that it is ambitious, relevant and well-sequenced, providing an excellent offer to each child. This wasn't necessarily in place previously, however, hope that the evidence of the progress made over the past 18 months will suffice.

In each area of the curriculum, there is now a clear plan for what and how children will learn, right from the first day of Nursery through to the end of Year 6. This means that we can plan to build on learning year on year, ensuring that the children build towards clear end points which will prepare them for secondary school and



beyond. All these documents can be seen on our school website, under the Curriculum pages.

We have also worked to consider the unique context of our school and how this is reflected through what the children learn. For example, in the summer term our Year 5 pupils will take part in a historical and geographical study all about how the school (and local community) came to be, due to the local papermills which were built along the canal.



Reading is a key priority within school and ensuring that each child sees themselves as a successful reader is a focus of our work. We have developed the phonics teaching in Early Years and Key Stage 1 to support this and have also purchased a new reading scheme which is being used once children move from the phonics scheme. This has been highly successful, with 87% of our Year 2 pupils

passing the phonics screening check this year, compared with c.80% in other years which, considering the disruption of the past few years is an excellent achievement. Our English subject leader has also worked hard to develop provision higher up the school, with training for staff as to how taught English lessons can be sequenced and planned, according to the books which have been purchased for each year group. Recently, the Governing Body carried out a monitoring morning in school where they heard more about this work, visited reading lessons and heard pupils read to see the impact of this work.

Our current focus within school is around our Early Years provision. The national framework for Early Years was rewritten this year, placing new expectations on what is taught and how. With support from the advisory team at Herts for Learning, we have recently rewritten our curriculum to ensure that it works towards the new outcomes and have added in some exciting new topics



including 'Superheroes' and 'Amazing Animals' to really get the children engaged! Before half term, we spent a week sorting and organising our Early Years rooms, purchasing a large amount of new furniture and equipment to ensure that our expectations are reflected in practice. We will now be working to embed this practice. Governors have a morning booked in March where they will be coming to see the impact of this work.

Christian Ethos

We were sad to say 'goodbye' to Reverend Richard earlier in the year. He had been a great supporter of our school and its work and a constant source of support in my first year at Nash Mills. However, since he left, we have worked more closely with Father James, who has visited me and run a few collective worship sessions for the whole school. We look forward to meeting the new team member when they are in role.



We have continued to embed the Understanding Christianity and Discovery RE teaching resources across the school, with positive results being seen through monitoring. There is notably a much greater opportunity for pupils to discuss things in depth and to challenge and interrogate ideas more regularly. This has led to increased participation in the subject and pupils report to enjoying the resources.



As we have started to come together, we have begun to develop pupil leadership within school and consider how our children can be empowered to be change-makers. We have continued to strengthen the House system, with each group coming together to discuss key topics and ideas. Our Year 6 pupils are currently working

their way through the Archbishop of York's Youth Leaders Award, which involves them working with their house groups to run community change projects. They have chosen these to include road safety on Belswains Lane. One of our groups is also focusing on community engagement and, as part of their work, they collected 'Christmas Treats' which were packaged up and sent to those in the community who had been recognised for helping others. These went down very well! We also sent a package to the retirement home as well as the recording of our Christmas carol service for the residents to watch.



We are keen to further develop the idea of courageous advocacy as we move forward and are currently taking part in the Church of England's National Youth Leader groups, which are aimed at providing steerage to the vision for education moving forward. I have also worked with other local CofE Headteachers to begin to design a system for our ambassadors to meet and share what their role is within school; this would help them to gain further insight and, in turn, support our school to develop its practice. This project seems to have taken the interest of the Diocese and we have been invited to take part in several other projects and asked to feedback about it as a result.



Each class has developed its range of resources and books for worship, part funded through the Leverstock Green Fund. Using the governor's Weston Fund, sets of children's Bibles were purchased for our Year 1 and 2 classrooms, which can be accessed throughout the day.

In looking after our wider community, we have also put a range of measures in place to support staff wellbeing. These include (but are not limited to):

- The provision of wellbeing days for staff; so far these have been for family celebrations or to take a long weekend where it is needed.
- Purchase of a range of reading books for the staffroom, funded through the Diocesan Community Life Fund.
- Provision of mental health and wellbeing support through our staff absence insurance provider.

School Resources

You may remember that, in the last report, we shared a number of improvements that had been to the fabric of the building. This has continued, with our Key Stage 1 classes being renovated over the summer and Nursery and Reception classes more recently, all with excellent results. In improving the learning environments, we are helping our pupils to have higher expectations of themselves and their peers. We hope to be able to show more people the result of this work as COVID eases and we can welcome more visitors in school.



We have also begun work on our reflections garden, providing pupils with a space for peace and calm, by adding benches and a willow structure as well as garden beds and planters. In the coming weeks, we will start to add some flowers and insect-friendly plants, which we hope to be ready for the spring.

In the autumn, we also undertook an extensive roofing project, which cost just over £200,000. On the entirety of our Key Stage 2 block and school hall, the roofing deck was replaced, increased insulation installed, and drainage improved to ensure the continued integrity of the building. Following this, we were also successful in a follow up bid to have our fire alarm system upgraded to allow for smoke detection and out-of-hours calling. This was at a cost of £40,000. These projects were mainly funded by the Diocese's School Condition Allocation (formerly known as



the LCVAP) so only a small proportion of the cost was passed onto the school. For the next year we have bid for funding to improve our school heating systems and to install LED lighting across the site.

Staffing

Following a reduction in the number of opportunities due to the pandemic, we have seen a few members of staff moving on to embark on new adventures in recent months.

Mr Rayner, our Sports Coach moved out of the area at Christmas and Moulton, one of our lunchtime staff will soon be moving also. Mr Patmore, our Site Manager, is soon moving to Yorkshire with his wife. Mrs Mooney, our Early Years Practitioner will also be leaving us to take on a role at another local school.



Since the last time of reporting, we have also been without Mrs Bachour, our Deputy Headteacher who was diagnosed with a brain tumour last May. Due to her ongoing treatment, Mrs Bachour has made the decision not to return to school, so we have begun to look for a new Deputy Headteacher. We continue to send her our best wishes and prayers at what has been a very difficult time for her and her family.

The situation surrounding COVID-19 continues to provide a range of challenges and difficulties in school which have, at times, slowed our momentum. However, I am sure that you will see from the report above that much has happened in school over the past 12 months. We are very proud of this and continue to see the fruits of our work, ensuring that our children and families get the very best offer whilst in our care.

16th February 2022

Appendix 1



Nash Mills CofE Primary School School Vision and Curriculum Intent

Our Core Vision	Love of Learning, Love of Life, Love of One Another			
	We are a family, defined by our core Christian values; Wisdom, Hope, Dignity, Forgiveness and Community. Every member of our school is supported in love to flourish as unique human beings, made in God's image. Together, we navigate life's journey in the safety of love and with compassion for others. This is underpinned by the story of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10, 25:37)			
Our Core Intent	Our school was founded by the paper industrialist John Dickinson in 1847 for the provision of education for local families and recognising every child, family, member of staff and governor as part of our extended family has continued since. Our curriculum will encourage questioning, the exploration of ideas and navigation of challenges to help prepare our children for the future. This is structured into a model with a progression of skills starting with the children's own experiences and developing to wider national and global aspects, with the creativity that encourages self-expression and the development of their talents.			
The Golden Threads are the values that drive our Intent	Wisdom and Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">A curriculum that is broad and balanced, giving all learners the opportunity to be the best that they can be.Awe inspiring.Encourages the ability to question and challenge.Promoting a positive mindset.	Hope and Aspiration <ul style="list-style-type: none">All learners to have a positive, growth mindset.To recognise the individuals who shaped our communityTo be prepared for life today and tomorrow.	Dignity, Forgiveness and Respect <ul style="list-style-type: none">Every learner to value their own self.Intrinsically display positive conduct as part of our school community.Supported through an RE, PSHE and wider curriculum offer which encourages them to question and challenge.	Community and Family <ul style="list-style-type: none">All learners to become rounded individuals who understand local, national and global issues and can become changemakers.To recognise the diversity and strengths of the local community.
	Spirituality <p>Our pupils will be able to develop curiosity through questioning that enables them to explore and articulate spiritual and ethical issues. Through a range of experiences and the stimuli these invoke, they will consider and recognise their feelings and learn from them.</p> <p>Pupils will learn these in the context of mirror, window, door and candle moments.</p>	Communication Skills <p>Our pupils will be able to communicate in a range of ways and to different audiences.</p> <p>They will be able to discuss, question, challenge and express their ideas while respecting the differences they have with others and developing the skill to disagree well.</p>		Cultural Capital <p>Our pupils will be exposed to the best that has been thought and said in a variety of topics through a broad curriculum aimed at providing them with a range of exciting and inspiring experiences which will allow them to become rounded educated citizens.</p>
The Silver Threads are woven across our curriculum to achieve this				

36. Oxygen Recovery at Nascent House

Vivian Hagel

Susan Rivett and I have been pleased to continue supporting Oxygen Recovery by delivering Welcome Boxes for new arrivals at Nascent House. Many of the clients have expressed their gratitude on receiving the boxes which contain basic toiletry items, stationery, an alarm clock and other items.

We would like to thank everyone who has so generously contributed again this year. We have delivered over 40 boxes during the year. At Christmas we dropped off a festive hamper for the clients staying there.

We would welcome anyone who would like to be involved with either a financial donation or provide items for the boxes. For further information please contact Vivian Hagel (01442 394657) or Susan Rivett (01442 266129)

Gary Aldridge – Area Manager

All the staff have worked tirelessly over the last 12 months, to continue to provide support to our clients. We have just reached another milestone of supporting over 350 people in the last six years.

Myself, and two other staff completed a fundraising half marathon in November. This was to raise money for a defibrillator. This will be allocated outside Oxygen and available for use by the church and wider public from March 2022.

We have almost redecorated the whole of the inside of the building now, with a new kitchen being installed next month (March). We have also been working hard in the garden over the last year.

We thank everyone for all the support and donations over the last year.

37. The Benefice of Langelei Newsletter

Jean and Mike Chrisp

In June 2019 we became editors of the newsletter. That and the September issues contained articles about a visit to the Holy Land. An amazing experience for those who went and for us to prepare the report. We also learnt about Embrace the Middle East, a charity based in Amersham which we now support. In the September 2019 issue we introduced ourselves.

Looking back, since then many church events have been advertised and reported in the newsletter. One hundred and fifty and one hundred and seventy celebrations, Christmas tree festivals, Angel festivals, Flower festivals, Quiz nights, Christmas Bazaars, and Breakfast with Santa to name a few.

We have published articles about lent courses, retreats, quiet days, poems with illustrations by Katharine Harper, messy church, Christian Aid information, reports of youngsters' first communion and, more recently, confirmations. We love the bug hotel in Kings Langley, we are making a dead hedge at home for our wildlife.

During lockdown there was community outreach, lockdown thoughts, many splendid photographs, the creation of food banks and the start of the environmental group.

We have included sad farewells, exciting welcomes, and a very special wedding at Holy Trinity.

There have been thought provoking articles about disability awareness, organ donations, Christians against poverty and more recently COP 26.

It has been an enjoyable privilege to prepare so many interesting contributions for publication in the Benefice Newsletter. We are very grateful to everyone who has contributed during the last three years and hope you will continue to support the newsletter.

All issues are available on the website:

<https://beneficeoflangelei.org.uk/benefice-newsletters/>

Church Hierarchy

38. Team Council

Peter Bladon

“Our Vision is of enabling and supporting the churches of our team to grow and flourish as we share the love of Christ in our communities”

The Team Council has had three meetings over the last year, all on Zoom, its main aim to work with the four P.C.C.s of the Benefice towards the above vision. There are various groups who report back to the team council at their meetings. The main areas of discussion at these meetings were around staffing, and church life communications, treasurers, environment and joint services.

It was agreed at the first meeting in May that since it was twelve years since the Benefice had been formed and, as we emerge from the lockdowns there was a need to look afresh at how we work as a team and to revisit our vision. The four P.C.C.s met together in October and the new vision was presented and then agreed by the four P.C.C.s before being presented and agreed at the November meeting.

On the staffing side, the Rev'd Richard Howlett retired at the end of September and after a Vacancy meeting held in October the position of team vicar for St Mary's and St Benedict's the job was advertised within the Diocese of St Albans in January. Hopefully we might have someone in post between July and September. The administrator's office at All Saints has had a door entry installed.

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. During 2020 the group held their meetings via emails to discuss various financial concerns and have continued to maintain a good working relationship. They once again drew up the fees to be used in 2022 for Marriages and Funerals which were then approved by the Team Council. 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 is at present under review and will be discussed at the next team council meeting before being passed back to local P.C.C.s for approval.

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 quarterly Benefice Newsletter, (edited by Jean and Mike Chrisp who are looking to retire from this role and are asking for people to take over from them) continues to contain articles and pictures from all four churches, and keeps those who read it (either on line or by hard copy) up to date with what has been happening or is going to take place, across the Benefice.

A Benefice joint service was held at St Mary's in August with an environmental theme. It was followed by a "bring and share" lunch which was enjoyed by all who came

The Benefice Environment Group had held several meetings during 2021, and it had been agreed that the work of the group should be included on future P.C.C. and Team Council agendas. Adrian Whalley who chaired the group has moved to Leicestershire.

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

39. Deanery Synod

Peter Bladon

There have been three meetings of Deanery Synod over the last year. At the first one at St John's Boxmoor the elections to Diocesan Synod took place. This is made up of four clergy and three laity from our Deanery. After a short break to celebrate being able to meet back in person again we

welcomed Revd. Harry Steel who is the Associate Director of Leading Your Church into Growth for Hertfordshire. This led to an open discussion about how the churches within the Deanery were dealing with coming out of the pandemic lockdown and reaching out to our members to encourage them back to services, and events at church. It was pointed out that we should think afresh about our main act of worship, and what has been learnt during the lockdown. Whatever we did before lockdown and what was important to us before, we should continue to do afterwards so our strategy should remain the same, but the tactics might change.

It was agreed that again at this first meeting in 2021 that the Deanery would continue to pay the Zoom subscription of all the Deanery churches.

The other two meetings held during the year covered the normal items i.e. Treasurer's, Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee and Parish reports and updates.

The Deanery Clergy Chapter continued to meet (via zoom) together and had to face (like us all) another challenging year. However, the Deanery Lay Chapter, did not meet during 2021, but 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 at the normal Synod meetings.

During 2021 the Deanery outing involving a coach trip did not take place and instead a walk was held to St Albans Abbey at which those who went attended evensong followed by refreshments. Hopefully another such event will take place in 2022.

40. Report of Deanery Synod proceedings

Carolyn Andrews
Deanery Secretary

This report covers the proceedings of the Hemel Hempstead Deanery Synod for the period from March 2021 to February 2022. During the year there were three Deanery Synod meetings, covering a variety of different topics. The key areas of discussion are reported below:

Tuesday 15th June 2021 at St John's Boxmoor

This was the first face to face meeting of Synod since before the start of the pandemic, and we celebrated this with a glass of fizz outside. We split into 2 houses in order to elect Diocesan Synod representatives. We welcomed Harry Steele, Associate Director of Leading Your Church Into Growth and the Church Growth Officer for Hertfordshire, and he gave an interesting talk on how we should look to emerge from the pandemic lockdown well and hopefully. The Deanery Treasurer Peter Bladon reported on deanery expenditure (covering Zoom subscriptions for the churches) and on parish share payment status. A short swap-shop of some upcoming events was shared, and the meeting ended with Compline outside.

Tuesday 19th October 2021 at Holy Trinity Leverstock Green

The Deanery Treasurer Peter Bladon reported on deanery expenditure (covering Zoom subscriptions for the churches) and on parish share payment status. We had a sharing session with questions and answers: Parishes shared with each other how they have been encouraging people to come back to worship post pandemic; How and with what they are engaging and involving the online audience; We shared ideas that others can feel encouraged by and emerge hopefully with. The meeting ended with a Taize style worship.

Tuesday 1st February 2022 at St John's Boxmoor

We welcomed the new Diocesan Secretary – David White. He introduced himself and shared some details of the purpose of the Diocesan Office and his role. The Rural Dean gave David an overview of the deanery. David then invited a Q and A from the synod members which covered strategy, covid recovery, and doing things differently post covid. The Deanery Treasurer Peter Bladon reported on deanery expenditure for the prior year, parish share payments, and advised about the forthcoming review of parish share factors. A sharing session followed – each parish shared one hope and one struggle they are experiencing. The Rural Dean reminded members that our MAPs are still a very useful tool and encouraged parishes to revisit them. The Rural Dean shared that our current Lay Chair – Rosina Gaddes – has decided to stand down, and he expressed our thanks for her service to the

Deanery over the last 5 years. Synod will now need a new Lay Chair and members were encouraged to consider if there could be a suitable person in their parish to fill this important role.

Further Deanery meetings planned this year:

Deanery Synod
Tuesday 28th June
Tuesday 18th October

Standing & Pastoral Committee
Wednesday 8th June
Wednesday 28th September

Events

41. Bike & Hike

Rosemary Bladon

Although I was out of action this year for the Bike and Hike we did have a representative on the route. Susan Rivett did the ride on her bike – and as it was on the day of our “150th Celebration Weekend” she was able to have a break and enjoy a burger, before doing some more miles! She raised £375, half of which comes to St Mary’s, which was gratefully received! so thank you to her.

Susan Rivett

The Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust organize a Bike & Hike annually. This event was established in 1992 and raises money to support churches in need of funds to help the restoration and repair of *churches* and *chapels* in Bedfordshire and *Hertfordshire*. Of the sponsorship money raised 50% goes to our church and 50% goes to the Trust. Our church as a whole usually sponsors Peter & Rosemary Bladon who have pounded the streets of Hemel raising probably thousands over recent years. For personal reasons they were unable to take part this year so I decided I would take up the challenge. The date, 11th September, coincided with the 150th Celebrations at St Mary’s so my plan was to arrive at St Mary’s, join the BBQ at lunchtime and then finish my route.

I aimed for over 40 churches starting in Wiggington and as soon as 9.00 am ticked over, Colin took the first photo at the Baptist Church before I rode for about two minutes to my second – St Bartholomews, Wiggington. It was then all downhill, literally to Tring (4) before turning my attention to Aldbury to visit St John the Baptist, a church I have visited often in my quest to improve my bell ringing! My first St Mary’s was at Northchurch heading into Berkhamsted where you can ‘catch’ as many churches (8) in a small distance. 11.27 am and 16 churches ticked off!

Feeling great and still on target, I headed to Bourne End (1) along Pix Lane to Chaulden (2) and uphill towards Warners End (2). It was the easy bit next, Northridge Way and Boxmoor. By contrast to the earlier years and a reflection on the Covid situation, most of the churches were unstaffed and did not have sheets to log my visit. St John’s Boxmoor was open with a sign in sheet and gave me my 25th church!

It was lovely to see the celebrations for 150th anniversary and the activities that were going on at St. Mary’s. I laid my bike down and I rested, joining in and talking with many familiar people that we had seen via Zoom for so long. I had intended staying here for half an hour but before I knew it the time had ticked on and I was now against the clock to reach my target of 40 churches. I left at about 2.45pm to head to Kings Langley. Fortunately, you can manage four churches in a short time frame however having gone all along the valley there was no alternative but to head off up Gallow’s Hill to Abbot’s Langley (2)! This route had me on very familiar territory as it is one of my regular cycling circuits. I had to get a move on so I didn’t loiter and headed to the Church of the Ascension (the ‘tin church’) and after the essential photo, a few of the English rolling hills along to Holy Trinity before going to the new Adeyfield Free Church, my childhood church of St Barnabas, (number 36), St Paul’s Church, Highfield and the Church of the Resurrection, Grovehill at 4.26 p.m.

I was just within my target. The day ends at 5.00 pm so with a great freewheel down the Link Road to my final St Mary’s; I arrived as a wedding party were just leaving the church! After two other churches

in Marlowes, I signed in at the Quaker Meeting House at 16.49! 42 churches finished in the official time and only the cycle home left. The last church I reached was fittingly Belmont Rd Baptist Church but out of time!

A big thank you to those that supported and sponsored me, 37.4 miles and about £450 raised if you include the gift aid.