

St Mary's – Apsley End

ANNUAL REPORT

23rd April 2023

including Agendas and Minutes for the
Annual Meetings



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Agenda for The Annual Meeting of Parishioners to elect Churchwardens

Sunday 23rd April 2023

To be held at 2 pm

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last annual meeting of parishioners held on 3rd April 2023
3. Election of two Churchwardens

Agenda for The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Sunday 23rd April 2023

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 3rd April 2022
 3. Matters arising
 4. To receive the new Electoral Roll
 5. To receive and approve the following reports:
 - a. The report of the Vicar
 - b. The Annual Accounts of the Parochial Church Council
 - c. The Report of the Deanery Synod Representatives
 - d. The report of the Secretary of the Parochial Church Council
 - e. The report by the Churchwardens
 - f. 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 two people to Deanery Synod for a term of three years
 - c. To elect three people to the Parochial Church Council for a term of three years
 - d. To elect one person to the Parochial Church Council for a term of one year
 - e. To elect those to serve as Sides people for the coming year
 - f. 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 3rd April 2022 in church and on Zoom

Meeting Started: 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Sylvia Low (Lay Chair of the PCC)

Secretary: Clare Denny

Present: 19 people in church and 1 on Zoom

	<i>Nominated by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
1 Apologies: Sue Jakeman, Melanie Henley, Brunhilda Davies, Joy West.		
2 The minutes of the last meeting (25 th April 2021) had been received by all members of the PCC at the first PCC meeting. Minutes approved without dissent.	Wendy Frampton-Salter	Peter Bladon
3 Election of 2 Churchwardens: <ul style="list-style-type: none">. Sylvia Low. Harry Graham-Brown Both approved and elected and agreed to stand.	Susan Rivett	Janet Wright
4 Meeting ended at 10.35 a.m.		

St Mary's Apsley End Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

Minutes of meeting 3rd April 2022 in church and on Zoom

Meeting Started 10.35 a.m.

Chair: Sylvia Low (Lay Chair of the PCC)

Secretary: Clare Denny

Present: 19 people in church and 1 on Zoom

Apologies: Sue Jakeman, Melanie Henley, Brunhilde Davies, Joy West.

		<i>Nominated by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
1	Apologies: Sue Jakeman, Melanie Henley, Brunhilde Davies, Joy West		
2	The minutes of the last meeting (25 th April 2021) had been received by all members of the PCC at the first PCC meeting. Minutes approved without dissent.	Laura Graham-Brown	Viv Hagel
3	Matters arising: None		
4	Revised Electoral Roll: The electoral roll now stands at 56 members compared to 57 at our last APCM in April 2021.	Susan Rivett	Janet Wright
5	To receive and approve the following reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	Fiona Shirley	Jean Chrisp
6	To appoint an Independent Examiner for the accounts for the coming year Colin Gage	Peter Bladon	Wendy Frampton-Salter
7	Elections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To elect up to three people to serve as Assistant Churchwardens Rosemary Bladon, Tim Ward, Dan Shirley b. To elect three people to the Parochial Church Council for a term of three years Rosie Sutton, Colin Rivett, Marina McKenna c. To elect one person to the Parochial Church Council for a term of two years Janet Wright d. To elect those to serve as Sides people for the coming year All on Electoral Roll e. To co-opt people to the Parochial Church Council. Nobody was elected. 	Colin Rivett	Dan Shirley

AOB: Viv Hagel wanted to thank all involved in appointing the new vicar with special thanks to the wardens, Harry Graham-Brown and Sylvia Low.

Meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.

Reports

Running the Church

1. Electoral Roll Report

Janet Wright

Church members included on the Church's Electoral Roll show the diocese the size of our congregation. This figure is used to calculate the Diocesan quota/parish share which is paid annually. Members of the Electoral Roll are entitled to function as sides persons and vote for the church representatives at the annual meeting of our Parochial Church Council. The roll has been revised (but not renewed) this month. Therefore, in March 2023, there are now 54 members registered. This revised roll will be presented for approval at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 23 April 2023. In 2025, we are due to create a new roll.

2. Churchwardens

Sylvia Low & Harry Graham-Brown

This year has seen great changes at St Mary's with the appointment of Mother Alice Jolley as our new Team Vicar in March 2022 with her licensing service held on September 6th 2022. Bishop Alan presided at this service with many of the local Clergy, Parishioners, community leaders and individuals along with Alice's partner Coral and their family and friends present. We were both involved in the preparation and organisations of this service assisting Rev Lizzie Hood. We extend a very warm welcome Alice and Coral to the St Mary's Apsley End church family and look forward working with them in the new era of St Mary's.

Unfortunately, the death of Queen Elizabeth II on 8th September 2022 meant that one of Alice's first duties was to deal with the death of our Monarch. A book of condolence was opened and remained in place until the day of her funeral; St Mary's was open daily for private prayer during this period.

Until Alice was in post, Sylvia continued to be the acting Lay Chair of the joint PCC and she was very pleased to relinquish this role in September! Unfortunately, Clare Denny relinquished her role as PCC secretary in November 2022 due to family reasons; we were sorry to lose Clare and we would like to thank her for all she did for the PCC. She did a fantastic job especially running her first ever APCM! In addition, thank you to Janet for supporting Sylvia as acting PCC secretary.

Many thanks to the many members of the congregation who volunteer to do the many jobs that ensure St Mary's Church continues to be a place for people to find and develop a growing relationship with God. This past year has seen a gradual return to normal operation of St Mary's with the reintroduction of the Chalice. Harry and Sylvia would also 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 that 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.

Another massive thank you to all the people within the Benefice who supported us in the maintenance of the Vicarage and its garden during the interregnum and the dedicated stalwarts who tidied St Benedict's Church and its garden prior to the licensing service; you were all magnificent.

Throughout the past year we have continued to have regular Warden's meetings with Lizzie Hood/James MacDonald (when Lizzie was on sabbatical and out of action due to illness) to review our online services, planning for future services, to deal with urgent matters and many more. Furthermore, when Lizzie was away the Churchwardens from Holy Trinity were part of these meetings. These meetings have continued with Alice but we have moved to a fortnightly frequency. A massive thank you to Lizzie, James and Jos plus the numerous Clergy that supported St Mary's during the interregnum; you are all wonderful.

However, with the Church operating as normal as possible the PCC voted to curtail live streaming of services on Zoom at the PCC meeting in November 2022. More people are now attending services but there are not as many children attending Sunday school as there had been prior to the pandemic; Messy Church, Sunday School, Saturday Café and Buzzy Bees continue their activities. This year we were able to have a normal Christmas with the first in person crib service with children enacting the Nativity since December 2019. This was very well-attended and much appreciated by all.

Finally, Harry and Sylvia had a successful Archdeacon's inspection in the July 2022; Sylvia supported St Benedict's when they had their inspection. We have also improved safety in the loft by having a serious tidy and reorganisation; there is still more to be done but it is now much easier to find things that are up there; we have invoked a "no dumping of stuff that has no home up there" rule! We have completed our inventory for this year and will be presenting our Inventory report to the PCC meeting in March 2023.

3. PCC Secretary

Sylvia Low

Until November 2022 Clare Denny continued in the role of PCC secretary but unfortunately due to family illness she resigned her position. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Clare for all she contributed to the PCC as secretary and for supporting me during the interregnum when I was Lay Chair of the PCC. In September 2022, we welcomed Mother Alice Jolley as our new Vicar and thus Chair of the PCC. As a consequence of Clare's resignation, I have taken on the role of acting PCC secretary with support from Janet Wright; this is only until the APCM where we hope someone will be willing to undertake this fulfilling role. All applicants welcome! Please note that plenty of support and practical help will be given to the lucky person who volunteers to do this.

The coordination of the APCM is one of the main roles of the PCC secretary and thanks to Janet setting up a great spreadsheet when she did the job; it has made this part of the role so much more straightforward than it might have been!

We have continued to hold joint PCC meetings with St Benedict's Church and this will continue for as long as it is required. The PCC minutes continue to be saved to the Google shared drive.

4. 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 with which we comply. These reports cover both St Mary's & St Benedict's and highlight actions which need to be fulfilled. There have been no safeguarding issues reported within St Mary's over the past year. The Parish Safeguarding Officer is the key link between the Diocese and the Parish concerning safeguarding matters. The key tasks of the Parish Safeguarding Officer are to have an overview of all church activities involving children and vulnerable adults and keep a record of these activities.

The national Parish Dashboard keeps our safeguarding records together; it is an online system that gives assurance to parishes that they are complying with statutory requirements and Church of England policies; it alerts the Church to changes to national policy and any reviews required. It allows the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to have an oversight of the parish position. The Dashboard generates

an action plan which highlights areas that need addressing. Ten DBS checks have been completed for St Mary's since April 2022.

I have ensured that volunteers within the Church have met their requirements and completed essential training, implementing or renewing DBS checks, Basic & Foundation Safeguarding certificates and in some cases Domestic Abuse Awareness. As the Parish Safeguarding Officer, I was required to complete further training in May 2022, the Safeguarding Leadership Pathway. This was two sessions via Zoom and required preparation, course work and a reflective conclusion. There have been amendments to leaflets and notices about key helplines put up in Church and I have attended meetings and forums on behalf of the Parish.

Safeguarding is not just a matter of words; Bishop Alan asks us all to ensure that 'safeguarding is embedded in all aspects of church life'.

5. Fabric Committee

Harry Graham-Brown

Trees

The Ash tree and detached branches, mentioned in the previous report, were dealt with.

Network Rail have sent a notice that we have 2 trees which are likely to fall onto the railway line. After this other Network Rail tree surveyors looked at our trees and did not find any issues. Currently, we have a request for Network Rail to send surveyors while we are on site so the issues can be resolved and any trees needing attention can be clearly marked.

Lowering of the floor near the main door

A brief was sent to our surveyor in April 2022. PCC reprioritised spending so notice boards take priority on the Peter Ward bequest. Clarity required from the PCC since funding and approval previously given.

Dec 2022 Fabric committee asks PCC to approve spending money to allow surveyor to draw up detailed plans specifications etc. This matter is now on hold until it can be discussed at the next PCC meeting.

Roof alarm

Insurers now insist that any keys for the roof alarm are held off site. Peter spent time confirming that these could not be locked in a safe. Decision taken to not get more keys because they are hugely expensive and to hand out the ones we have.

Annual inspection of the church fabric

This was carried out by members of the fabric committee. There are no major items of concern. We did note that the gate near the bridge had become unstable and a decision was taken to remove it to make it safe.

6. Monday and Friday Working Parties

Peter Bladon

Both of these working parties have had another busy year, during 2022. Working to government rules, these groups 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, clearing up leaves and fallen branches, 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.

We have drawn up plans to develop the churchyard to encourage its wildlife and more details concerning this are on the refectory notice boards. So please do have a look at them, 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 a couple of new members join the group but would welcome some younger members as the rest of us are all getting older!! Meanwhile many thanks to those who come on a Monday and Friday mornings and give of their time and talents to help look after the church and churchyard.

7. Servers

Jim Aylott

The serving team take this opportunity to welcome Mother Alice Jolley to St Mary's leading us in our services; it's nice to have a regular priest each week. As we continue to use the small Altar it makes it difficult to work as a team because we are restricted in our space to move around the Altar. Basically, there is only enough room for one person to perform the required duties. Also, we have yet to put all the fittings back in Church. Once we go back to the main Altar we can then work as a team as we would have the space to move in the respected manner for our Sunday Eucharist. As a team it's been decided among us that Susan and I will be alternating our Sunday Eucharist serving while Paul has a rest. Paul will return when we move back to the main Altar. He will help out on the special services we have throughout the year like midnight mass. It is great to have the pulpit back in use again it makes a big difference to our weekly sermon.

8. Sacristan

Jim Aylott

I would like to thank all the members of the congregation who donated their unwanted candles to me over the past year. I am very grateful for this because it does make a big saving as candles are becoming expensive. Since we are using the small Altar as a preferred choice and all the fixtures and fittings are locked in the Vestry (this is for insurance reasons because the Church is open and unattended for private prayer) we are lighting a limited number of candles at our services. Recently, we have started to share the Chalice because this has not been in place for a full year the amount of Communion wine used is low. These two items alone have made a big saving on my budget. I would like to remind everyone that the Chalices are sterilized each week to remove any germs.

9. Bell ringers

Brian Watson
Tower Captain and Steeple keeper

With the lifting of all Covid restrictions normal ringing has resumed. We rang for the 9.30 am service except in the earlier part of the year when on several Sundays there were not enough ringers. Later in the year we were joined by a ringer who has not rung for 14 years. His daughter has now started to learn to ring. Due to absences and illness we were unable to ring for the Christmas services.

During the year there were a number of royal occasions for which we rang. In February a quarter peal was rung to mark the 70th anniversary of the late Queen's Accession. We were unsuccessful in ringing a quarter peal for the Platinum Jubilee. When the death of the Queen was announced the bells were fully muffled with muffles on both sides of the clappers except the tenor which was only muffled on one side. This is traditional for the death of a monarch. The muffles stayed on until after the State Funeral.

Chris Gill and Geoff Fielding tolled the tenor for an hour at 5.30 pm the day after the Queen died. Quarter peals were rung the following two Monday evenings instead of practices in memory of the Queen. Once the muffles were removed two more quarter peals were rung on Monday evenings. The first was for the Accession of King Charles III and the second to welcome Alice and Coral.

A total of 11 quarter peals were rung during the year. Two worthy of including in this report are one rung in February in thanksgiving for the lives of Sue Gill's parents and the other in October as an 18th birthday compliment to Chris Gill and an 80th birthday compliment to Brian Watson.

Chris Gill was the conductor of the Young@Herts ringers in the Ringing World National Youth Contest at Exeter in July when they were placed equal 4th.

We hosted the District meeting and striking competition for the Gus Good (Apsley) Trophy in May. Hemel Hempstead were placed first and Apsley second. These two teams went forward to compete in the Kimpton Cup in September at Welwyn with the same result. However, there were only 4 teams competing from the whole of Hertfordshire.

We did not hold an outing this year. The only other social event in which we participated in was the Church quiz in October when we came second!

10. Fund Raising Group

Vivian Hagel

Firstly, thank you to all members of the fundraising group and to all those who came and supported the events held throughout the year.

We held our popular **Pancake Evening** on Shrove Tuesday 1st March and we thank Sue Jakeman and Gemma Townsend for providing and cooking the pancakes once again.

On Easter Sunday 17th April an **Easter Trail** was organised, thank you Helen and Gemma. It was a great success and we raised £106 including some sales of preserves.

Planning then got underway for the **Queens Jubilee Tea Party** which was held on Saturday 4th June at 2pm. This was a lovely afternoon with over 80 people who came and enjoyed the wonderful food and many cups of tea. There were also games and activities for families to enjoy as well. The total raised for this event was £436.50. We extend our thanks to the many people who baked and helped make this event so special.

Our next event was a **Quiz Night** held at Nash Mills Primary School. We had a total of 7 teams taking part. It was a fun evening with Dan as the quiz master. We also held a raffle for some hampers. This successful evening raised £325.

The annual **Christmas Bazaar** was held on Saturday 19th November. As always, it was a popular and well attended event raising over £2100.

We were delighted to end the year with an outing for the **RCHH Santa Sleigh**. Bob and Alan from St Benedict's Church joined Rosemary, Peter, Susan and I on a very cold but enjoyable evening. This was held on Saturday 10th December, starting with the sleigh that was stationed in Apsley Lock. We then went on route around the Belswains area of Nash Mills. It was a great occasion and a good start to the festive season. In January we received £350 for our two churches.

Planning is now underway for events to take place during 2023 and we look forward to seeing you at these in due course.

11. St Marys Manual

Janet Wright and Roger Witts

Current Editors: Janet Wright & Roger Witts.

The St Mary's Manual started life back in about 2015 as an audit and description of the many jobs done by so many people in and for our church. Thanks are due to the original team of Roger Witts, Tony Woods, Chris Bentley, Nick Gill and David Lawson.

It was updated and re-published in August 2023 and can be found in paper form in a large red folder at the back of church or on our Google Drive via <https://bit.ly/StMsMan> or this QR code:



The idea is to provide information about the many jobs and roles that are carried out and who is involved so that, if someone is not able to carry out the role or there is an emergency, there is some initial guidance available to whomever takes over.

It is very much an ongoing work. But it would be great if folk would dip into it, read some of the sheets and then feedback where you think information is either missing, too long or simply wrong. This feedback can be done by writing on the paper version (please add your name and date) or by emailing me on janet@apsleyend.co.uk.

In addition, please use it! We plan to do an update in May each year.

12. Communications Group

Laura Graham-Brown

During lockdown the Church family got more comfortable using online communications, such as email and Facebook. This trend has continued; we now have an active presence on Facebook for both our Church family members and visitors to the Church. The Church now has a twitter account @StMarys1871.

With the Church now being fully used the boards in the refectory have become more vital and we've had some impressive displays throughout the year. We are constantly looking at which ways we can assess and improve communications both within the Church family and to visitors.

Finance

13. Accounts

Peter Bladon
Treasurer

ST MARY'S CHURCH - APSLEY END			
FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR			
	31-Dec-22	12	
	Actuals	Budget for 12 months	Budget for Year
INCOME :	£	£	£
General Fund			
General Collections	2,446.31	2,541.00	2,541.00
Pledged Giving	26,235.68	28,000.00	28,000.00
Tax Refunds	6,727.84	6,000.00	6,000.00
Fees	714.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
Fund Raising/Christmas Bazaar	3,667.55	4,000.00	4,000.00
Special Collections	66.72	400.00	400.00
Donation 200 Club	500.00	480.00	480.00
Donations - General	22,447.28	6,000.00	6,000.00
Donations - Use of Church Facilities	1,272.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Organist Sponsorship	1,814.49	500.00	500.00
Fund Raising	0.00	700.00	700.00
Wootton Grant	0.00	2,700.00	2,700.00
General Fund Total	65,891.87	0.00 54,821.00	54,821.00
Fabric Fund General			
Income & Interest on CBF Account	0.00	0.00	
Fabric Fund General Total			
Education Fund	196.55	196.55	
Churchyard Fund	30.00	30.00	
Donation Fund	2,585.97	2,585.97	
Benefice Newsletter	0.00	0.00	
Choir Fund	0.00	0.00	
200 Club	1,216.19	1,216.19	
Solo Lunch	27.00	27.00	
Wootton Bequest	661.04	661.04	
Ward Bequest	1,612.79	1,612.79	
Buzzy Bees	1,069.20	1,069.20	
Special Collections	66.72	66.72	
Total	73,357.33		
EXPENDITURE :			
General Fund Total			
Clergy Expenses	691.36	500.00	500.00
Organist	1,920.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Repairs and Maintenance	770.36	700.00	700.00
Utilities	4,905.21	4,000.00	4,000.00
Insurance	2,143.98	2,000.00	2,000.00
Sacristy	172.94	400.00	400.00
Administration	548.64	700.00	700.00
Diocesan Parish Share	41,810.00	41,810.00	41,810.00
Parish Administrator	3,472.00	3,473.00	3,473.00
Special Collections	66.72	400.00	400.00
General Fund Total		56,501.21 54,983.00	54,583.00
Fabric Fund General			
Education Fund	0.00	0.00	
Churchyard Fund	0.00	0.00	
Donation Fund	3,030.02	3,030.02	
Benefice Newsletter	0.00	0.00	
Choir Fund	0.00	0.00	
200 Club	1,170.00	1,170.00	
Organist Fund	0.00	0.00	
Buzzy Bees	500.00	500.00	
Special Collections	66.72	66.72	
Total Expenditure	61,267.95		

Balance sheet as at 31st December 2022

ASSETS :						£
Central Board of Finance Deposit Account						37,405.17
Nat West Bank Account						44,657.41
						82,062.58
TOTAL						
REPRESENTED BY SOURCES OF FUNDS AS FOLLOWS :						
	31-Dec-21	Income	Expenditure	Profit/(Loss)	31-Dec-22	
General Fund	57.36	65,891.87	56,501.21	9,390.66	9,448.02	
<u>Restricted Accounts</u>						
Fabric Fund	(30.90)			-	(30.90)	
Education Fund	465.33	196.55		196.55	661.88	
Churchyard Fund	166.97	30.00		30.00	196.97	
Donation Fund	2,202.70	2,656.11	3,030.02	(373.91)	1,828.79	
Solo Lunch	252.60	27.00		27.00	279.60	
Choir Fund	453.59			-	453.59	
200 Club Fund	1,334.18	1,216.19	1,170.00	46.19	1,380.37	
Buzzy Bees Fund	620.92	1,069.20	500.00	569.20	1,190.12	
Special Collections	0.00	66.72	66.72		0.00	
<u>Designated Accounts</u>						
Ward Bequest	17,000.00	1,612.79		1,612.79	18,612.79	
Wootton Bequest	47,380.31	661.04		661.04	48,041.35	
TOTAL	69,903.06	73,427.47	61,267.95	12,159.52	82,062.58	

Signed P.J.Bladon

31st January 2023

18/02/2023

14. Financial Report

Peter Bladon
Treasurer

2022 was again a difficult year for the financial aspects of the Church, and indeed without a bequest from Daphne Wicks we would again have ended the year with a loss.

Looking at the income side, pledged giving was £1,765 down on budget. General collections and general donations (blue envelopes) were up against budget by £16,447 (mainly due to the Wicks bequest). We again lost a few of our pledged giving members during the year. In addition, we again 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 £727, (many thanks to Jim Aylott for all his hard work in this area) but the Fees account came in £1,786 below budget mainly due to few weddings and only three funerals. The fund raising made up of the Easter Hunt, Christmas Bazaar, Bike and Hike, Quiz Evening and a few smaller fundraising events, with a great deal of work by a handful of people came in £1,033 below budget. Donations for the use of the Refectory were up £272 against budget. The '200' Club was able to raise £500 for general funds which was slightly up against budget. The Organist donations/sponsorship was up against budget by £1,314 (and many thanks must go to all those who sponsored during the year and to Janet Wright for her work in this area). However, we continue to look for support in this area during 2023 as the P.C.C. at their last meeting agreed to increase the organist payment up to £70 per service.

So overall our total income was just over **£11,000** up against budget, mainly due to the Daphne Wicks bequest.

The total expenditure was up **£1,852** on budget which was mainly due to the increase in our utility bills even allowing for a grant received from the Diocese of £1,279 to help us meet the rising costs. Looking at our total expenditure, we had to pay 85% (£47,893) in respect of our Diocesan Parish Share, clergy expenses, organist and Benefice administrator.

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 no reserves in the **Fabric Fund** at the end of 2022.

The **Education Fund** has benefited from income from Messy Church of £196 during 2022. There was no expenditure claimed for in 2022.

The **Churchyard Fund** has benefited from the £30 from the War Graves and nothing was paid out for oil and petrol for the mowers/trimmer's and general maintenance of machines during the year as this was donated, making a surplus during the year of over £30.

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 £373. Also, we did receive a donation from the Rotary Club of £350 for our participation in the Santa Sleigh collection in 2022. The **Solo Lunch** balance at the end of 2022 (of £279) had not changed due to no lunches being held during 2022. As already mentioned, the **'200' Club** generated £500 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 met for most of the year and donated £500 out of their income for their use of the Refectory on a Tuesday morning, and their balance now stands at £1,190.

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 interest.

Ward Bequest A further £1,612 was from the final settlement of the estate of Peter Ward.

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 2023 General Fund is attached to these reports. This shows we are faced with a deficit on the general account of **£5,000**. Hopefully, in 2023, as we move back to normal times, we should be in a better position for people to review their Church giving/support and for us to increase fundraising events!

My thanks go to John Castles, 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. 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.

15. Budget for 2023

Financial Group
January 2023

ST MARY'S APSLEY END, PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2023

<u>INCOME</u>	£
Collections in Church	2,500
Pledged Giving (Stewardship)	29,000
Donations – Gift Aid	4,000
Donations - Use of Church Facilities	1,800
Tax recovered through Gift Aid	6,000
Fees	2,500
Fundraising/Christmas Bazaar	5,000
200 Club	500
Special Collections	400

Organist Sponsorship	1,500
Income deficit	<u>4,983</u>
Total Income	£58,183

EXPENDITURE

Clergy Expenses	700
Repairs & Renewals	700
Utilities	5,000
Insurance	2,200
Sacristy	400
Administration	600
Parish Administrator	3,473
Diocesan Common Fund (Parish Share)	43,710
Organist	1,000
Special Collections	<u>400</u>
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	£58,183

Notes

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

16. Independent Examiner

John Castles

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 2022 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: John Casstles, Independent Examiner

Dated: February 2023

17. Stewardship Secretary

Jim Aylott

I would like to thank the members of the Stewardship scheme for your continued support of St Mary's Church and again those who increased their giving to the Church, but I regret to say that this was, unfortunately, insufficient to meet our expenditure. We all need to reflect on what we are giving to the Church each week and whether we are able to afford to increase our pledged giving through the Stewardship Scheme. Perhaps this is the time to start a campaign to try to add some new members to the Stewardship Scheme; we really do need some more members to survive. On a brighter note, we are now back to our weekly services and this has helped to increase our congregation in size and thus the Sunday collection. As the Church is back to running normally, congregation sizes are increasing and fundraising activities are resuming thus the Church is in a better position to be able to increase much needed Church funds for next year.

Worship & Study Groups

18. Sunday School

Peter Bladon

Our Sunday School has continued in the Refectory over the last year during the 9.30 am service. Over 2022 the number of children and adults attending ranged from 4-12. We continued to use the "Living Water" resource books which normally follow the liturgy of what is taking place in Church for that Sunday with, worksheets, word searches, colouring sheets and craft work. Some of these drawings etc then find their way onto the Sunday School board at Church. We no longer show the video which the Diocese used to produce (they have stopped doing it!).

Some of the Sunday School members took part in the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. As the Christmas story was brought to life and all are an important part of St Mary's not only for the present but also for the future!

As we move further into 2023 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 six teachers.

19. Messy Church

Laura Graham-Brown

We have enjoyed a full year of in-person Messy Church services. Our congregation has grown and welcomed new families. We have welcomed a new member to our leadership team, Kris. Activities

have included soap making, printing and even a few science experiments. Sue has become our wonderful storyteller and the children have enjoyed acting in the stories and reading out the prayers.

Resources for Messy church have mostly been moved into a cupboard in the refectory which has benefitted the Sunday School. We are very grateful to the working party for their support. In January 2023 we celebrated our 10th birthday and we already have plans well into 2023.

20. Thursday Morning Bible Study Group

Melanie Henley

The Thursday morning bible study group meets weekly from 10.15 to approximately 11.15 in the Refectory. We usually have a break during August and over Christmas and Easter time. During 2022, Father James McDonald joined us once a month, usually on the first Thursday of the month (thank you James) until September 2022 when Mother Alice joined us. 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!

21. Thursday Evening House Group

Laura Graham-Brown

We have continued to meet virtually and are acting as a pastoral group for each of us. Due to life getting busier we haven't met every week. During Lent we will be one of the study groups.

Community

22. Buzzy Bees

Lilian Hepwood (Amanda, Ann, Helen, Jen, Julie, Sheila & Yvie)

How wonderful to have had a normal year of Buzzy Bees meetings after the huge disruption of Covid! We've enjoyed well-attended and relaxed sessions averaging 16 families each week. They have been given opportunity for play and social interactions which have been enjoyed by carers, children and volunteers alike. Many newborn babies have been brought along and it has been fascinating to watch their development and how their play changes as they get older.

We continue to try to provide a good pre-nursery experience, both physical and tactile for the children and to support the adults who need it by directing them to people who can help. It is pleasing to see the adults being able to socialise and share with each other any concerns they have about parenting or child-minding. The craft and singing sessions give opportunities for the carers to talk to and support their children whilst developing their verbal skills.

We replaced our planned outing in the summer with lots of fun activities and a picnic in the Church grounds. We realised that this would be more suitable and enjoyable for this age range; due to free nursery from the age of 3 the children are now younger than those who attended previously. With wonderful weather outside we also had a very good Jubilee party with lots of fun activities and party food.

The Christmas party was one of our best ever with a short session in the Church learning about the Christmas story. We are very grateful for the support of Rosemary and Peter and for their popular appearance as Father and Mrs Christmas. This term, we have been pleased to have Mother Alice visit and getting to know our members. We have also welcomed a new volunteer, Jen Reynolds. We are looking forward to the new year and extending the Christian input during our singing time.

23. Solo Plus Lunch

Joy West

In March, 26 people attended a simple lent lunch in the refectory. Susan Rivett, who is a volunteer at Gaddesden Place, spoke to us about the horses and the work with young people at this local Riding Centre for the Disabled. We were able to send the charity over £140 from our lent lunch collection.

Our first monthly meal was held on April 28th 2022. Twelve of us enjoyed fellowship and a two course meal. We welcomed some regular attendees as well as some new faces.

Unfortunately, I have not been well enough to continue to organise these lunches. Many thanks to everyone who has helped make these lunches such lovely occasions. If anyone would like to restart this monthly event or something similar, I would be happy to support them.

24. Saturday Community Café

Peter Bladon

We have since January 2022 got back 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 and fresh fruit once again!

My thanks go to all those who have continued to run and support the Saturday mornings over the last year and remember we would always welcome new members to join the small rota we have at present who run this important outreach event. Hopefully over the next year this café will grow back in its attendance to its previous numbers again - so if you are around on a Saturday morning why not join us and please tell your family and friends!

25. Local Outreach

Rosemary Bladon

I do manage to deliver the weekly bulletin to the residents at Florence Longman House every week – and sometimes see them and have a chat too!

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 over £100 and we thank them and all those who came along to support it.

We held a Jubilee Tea on the 4th June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee another success event with good support both from the local community as well as our own members.

We did once again this year manage to have Carol Singing at the Paper Mill pub and collected over £66 for Dens and did manage to do a stint on the Santa Sleigh and raised £350 for general church funds. Again in 2022 Father Christmas and his driver were asked to meet at Apsley Marina so that people could take photos before the sleigh started on its travels.

We did run our usual Christmas Bazaar in mid-November the first one for three years and over £2,500 was raised. Not only that, it was well-attended with many local people coming along to support their local church!

On Christmas Eve we again had the Christmas Story and the figures being placed in the Crib with many of the children joining in dressed up for the event. Here again we had some members of our local community attending.

26. Foodbank

Jackie Lintern

Open between 10.00am and midday every Thursday.

Manned by two regular local volunteers.

1st half of 2022: they checked stock for in-date clearance, set it out as required in the porch and returned to back-room store area at end of each session. They also arranged collection of donations from local Dunelm store, where required.

2nd half of 2022: owing to increased volume of foodbank visitors (at least 3x greater than 2021), changed process to pre-prepared mixed bag(s) for distribution on arrival. This allowed better control of more limited stocks.

Excess personal hygiene items forwarded to Nascent House (Druglink).

Excess childrens' clothes items forwarded to Alternatives in The Marlowes.

Clothing rags forwarded to British Heart Foundation shop.

Animal Angel Rescue provides cat/dog food and pet support.

Contact from Karen Kelly at DENS, as part of her wider brief from Dacorum Council to support other local foodbanks and social deprivation programmes. Enables individual referral if/as required.

Q1 2023: plan to move from porch location (cold and unwelcoming) to communal room (from mid-Feb). Will use rear door entrance (avoids disturbing any activity in main church). Combination with tea/coffee to encourage better socialising.

One volunteer has completed Level 2 Food Hygiene training, as also requested support/access to local Aldi & Sainsbury's excess stocks (some perishable) via "Neighbourly" association and App. Awaiting allocation on list, so volunteers can collect stocks 1 day/week (Thursday before opening) and have stocks on site for distribution. Also allows potential for using church facilities for future simple food prep on site if stocks are made available. Work in progress!

Have suggested finding one/two back-up volunteers in case of illness or other requirements moving forward, especially if the activities around the foodbank develop further.

27. Nash Mills C of E Primary School

Allan Maher, Headteacher



This school year has felt much more 'normal' than the previous three, with rates of illness subsiding and school feeling much more as we would hope. In September, we were joined by Lee Shane, our new Deputy Headteacher, who has had an immediate impact to how the school runs and will be pivotal in the next stage of our development. We are also delighted to be able to be working with the church more closely again, since Mother Alice's arrival and have enjoyed a number of visits, opportunities for worship and other sessions with her.

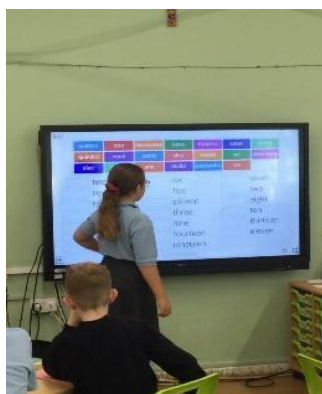
In November, we had our long-overdue OFSTED inspection, which found the school to be 'good' in all areas. I will share more about this in the following paragraphs.

Regarding school organisation, numbers remain very stable; 230 pupils on role, with all classes between Reception and Year 6 being full. We currently have 19 children in our Nursery. We have had the applications for new Reception children for September 2023 shared with us and have 118 applications for our 30 places; 6 of these were under the Church rule. This is very promising given the low birth rate locally; many schools have reported a drop in applications whereas ours is up by 17%. I feel that this is partly due to the work done to share news about our school within the community; we have featured in the Kings Langley Gazette on a number of occasions, opened our school for weekend hirings and held a very successful community event to celebrate our 175th anniversary in October.

Quality of Education

Over the past two years, we have worked hard in school to ensure that our curriculum is clearly mapped and sequenced to ensure that all of our children get the best possible offer. During our recent OFSTED visit, inspectors noted that this curriculum plan was “meticulous in identifying the knowledge for pupils to learn” and, “as a result, pupils, including those in early years, develop skills and understanding in each subject area”. This is a real testament to the hard work of staff in creating this plan and ensuring that it has been enacted fully. We are now looking at how we can really focus on specific areas of the curriculum to ensure that our pupils know and remember the most important parts with confidence.

OFSTED also recognised the school’s focus on reading and how “by the end of Year 1, most pupils have the phonic knowledge then need to be able to read”. In the past three years, the percentage of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics check has improved from 80%, to 87% to 97% in 2022. This reflects the hard work of staff and the relentless efforts to ensure that every child is a reader. We continue to invest in books across the school, making sure that each class has a good selection of materials that are engaging, exciting and at the level to provide appropriate challenge to the children.



Other key developments within the curriculum this year have been:

- The completion of a project around the school’s history which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As part of the project a local artist was employed to work with pupils to research and organise elements of the history of Nash Mills. This resulted in a fantastic artwork, which is displayed in the school’s entrance hall and on the website for all to see.



- The start of a project in partnership with the Italian Embassy. This involves the school adopting Italian as a modern foreign language and, in return, we are visited for two-days each week by a trained Italian teacher; Maestro Corrado. This has really improved the quality of education for our children; they have noted that the sessions are fun but that they *now* have to pronounce things correctly!

- We have also introduced a new computing curriculum, which places an updated focus on computer science and programming. For this, we have purchased some new equipment which will allow pupils to experience coding and learn how it is done. This really brings the curriculum into the 21st century!



Within the Early Years, we have continued to develop how learning is planned and organised for pupils. We have seen a difference in the cohorts in both Reception and Nursery this year, with pupils requiring more supporting in many areas, which we believe is an impact of the COVID pandemic. As a result, we have employed an additional Early Years Practitioner who is working to try and close these gaps for pupils.

We have also begun a project, working with 29 schools from across Hertfordshire to develop our approach to equality and diversity. This has prompted some interesting discussion and consideration around how we support our pupils to respect and recognise the fact that they are all different. In April, staff will be spending time looking at the curriculum to see whether it reflects the diversity of our pupils.

A final note for the quality of PE in school...last season, our football team won the district league, beating over 40 other schools!



Christian Ethos

I was delighted that our OFSTED report commented on the school's work to embed the story of 'The Good Samaritan' and that it "is now threaded through much of the school's pastoral work". The inspectors noted how well the children supported each other and interacted, particularly around the value of community and friendship; "pupils understand the importance of working together positively".

The inspectors also noted how the children demonstrated our core values of wisdom, hope, dignity, forgiveness and community.



It has been exciting getting to know Mother Alice since she began her work in the parish and seeing her relationship with the school begin to grow and develop. Alice has been into school to meet with our Reflections Ambassador team and to discuss things that we could do to further develop our work. Pupils have been keen to ask for Alice's advice and views on a range of areas.

At the end of the autumn term, Alice also came into school to support classes as they finished their RE topics. Pupils had the chance to discuss what they had learnt and to question Alice about areas that they still didn't fully understand. This is an area in which we hope to further

develop; helping our children to be able to question and challenge in a mature and well-planned way. We have continued to embed our RE curriculum within school and, with the new agreed RE syllabus being released later this year, we will have to consider whether any tweaks are needed to ensure that it remains up-to-date. New members of staff have been on Diocese training around the curriculum and also the delivery of Collective Worship to ensure that all have the same level of skill.

We have continued our work to develop the school within the local community. At Christmas, our choir performed in the town centre to support Christian Aid and videos of their singing were sent to the local care home (we did try to visit, but it was not possible this time). We also made special 'Parcels of Thanks', which were delivered to local residents who had been nominated by pupils and their families. These were well-received! Our Year 6 pupils have started to complete the Archbishop of York's Youth Leadership Scheme, which we hope to finish by the time they leave us in July.



School Resources

Our focus on developing the fabric of the school has continued. Following works in recent years to our main building's roof and the new fire alarm system, this year we have installed LED lighting across the school to aid our energy efficiency. We have requested funding from the Diocese to replace our heating system in school so that each class is kept warm in as efficient a way as possible. This funding was not forthcoming in 2022, but a new bid has been submitted for 2023 and we hope to hear soon as to whether the project will go ahead.



We continue to make use of the different elements of funding available to us; this year our governors funded new stage lighting in our school hall, which has improved the experience of pupils when performing. They are also currently funding each class for the children to develop special reading spaces – I have loved seeing how creatively this is being done!



We have also had a significant amount of work completed in our Early Years, with a complete redesign of the outdoor learning areas. This project came in at a cost of £60,000 although our PTA funded £10,000 of this. It has made a huge difference to the area and for the potential activities which can now take place. There are clear areas for physical play, construction, gardening and sand and water play. It looks fantastic!



Staffing

Sadly, following her battle with cancer, Mrs Bachour, our previous Deputy Headteacher passed away in September. Many of the staff were able to attend her funeral and to pay their respects. It was an especially difficult time for the school family, however the team pulled together and supported each other admirably. Our thoughts and prayers were shared with Mrs Bachour's family throughout and we have remained in touch.

At the end of the last school year, we also said goodbye to Mrs Bill, who retired after teaching at Nash Mills for 17 years. We held a 'tea party' on the school field where the children and staff, past and present, were able to say 'thank you' to her.

We have also had a number of appointments, with two newly qualified teachers joining us in September, two new Early Years Practitioners joining us and two teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs.

Miss Jones, our Year 6 teacher started her maternity leave in October, shortly after welcoming Lily into the world. Both are doing well.

28. Oxygen Recovery at Nascent House

Vivian Hagel

Over the last year Susan and I have continued to support clients at Nascent House by delivering Welcome Boxes on their arrival. These boxes that contain many items, including basic toiletries, stationary, sweets and an alarm clock. These are always well received. We have had some lovely thank you letters and cards from some of the recipients. Over the last year we have delivered 38 boxes and are extremely grateful and thank those of our congregation for providing the items for these boxes and also monetary donations as well.

If you would like to be involved in contributing items or to donate financially, please contact Vivian Hagel – 01442 394657 or Susan Rivett- 01442 266129.

Gary Aldridge – General Manager

We have recently replaced our kitchen with thanks from Howdens for their help and generous donation. We are so pleased with the new space and will help clients focus on their nutritional intake.

Charity wide we are increasing staff wages and our incredible staff will see an increase which is a true reflection of their hard work and dedication to Druglink.

We are pleased to be working with Safer Places, a leading domestic abuse charity and are now providing specialist housing and recovery support with a new pilot project in partnership with them.

We have been successful in receiving a grant application from Hertfordshire County Council to provide a 12 month project on the “5 Steps to Wellbeing” for services based in Hertfordshire. Also B & Q have awarded us a grant which will help us refurbish our head office.

We are extremely excited due to fundraising and a grant from one of our local councillors we have raised enough money for two defibrillators. One housed at Oxygen Recovery and one at Trefoil House.

The partnership with Kings Langley Football Club is an exciting project for all involved. It allows us to reach out to our local community and believe it will breakdown the stigma around addiction.

Exciting news is that we have been successful in bidding for funds to provide a minibus for the charity. This will enable us to help clients to travel to work, groups and days out.

Druglink are delighted to announce that just before Christmas we were granted our CQC registration to open our detoxification service. We opened our doors on the 9th January. This has been 4 years in the making and one year planning so we are really proud of this new service and all the hard work that has gone into opening it.

We thank all those who have supported us over this last year.

29. The Benefice of Langelei Newsletter

Jean and Mike Chrisp

It is regrettable that it was agreed to abandon publication of the Newsletter due to lack of volunteers to take over the editors role.

The absence of the Newsletter removes the archive facility it provides so those interested in the future have nothing to refer to.

The issues produced this year were March, June and September 2022.

All issues are available on the website:

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

Church Hierarchy

30. Team Council

Peter Bladon

“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 four 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, Church life communications, treasurers, environment and joint services.

At its first meeting the new Benefice vision shown above was approved having been passed by all the Benefice PCCs, and it was agreed would be reviewed in five years' time.

The vacancy for St Mary's and St Benedict's was advertised on the Diocesan website in January 2022 and a short list of 4 applicants for interview was made in February. At the time of writing the last report interviews had not yet taken place. However, following a busy interview day in March Mother Alice Jolley was appointed as Team Vicar for St Mary's and St Benedict's.

Norma is back to working her normal hours as the Benefice administrator.

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 2022 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 2023 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 and Benefice office expenses.

The **communications group** - Its main aim is to communicate information across all four Churches by use of the website, all 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 retired from this role in September 2022, with all our thanks) continued to be published for three quarters during 2022. At the September meeting, after referring this to each of the PCC's, it was agreed that as only one Church was in favour of continuing the newsletter in its present form and that the other three Churches were keen to develop their own means of communication that the newsletter would cease. This decision will be reviewed in September 2023, meanwhile it was agreed that there should be a Team Events page on the website to keep people updated.

A locally held **Benefice Quiet Day** was discussed and hopefully will be held in the summer of 2023.

At the September meeting a special welcome was also extended to Mother Alice.

The **Benefice Environment Group** - Several articles had been written during 2022 by the group, and it had been agreed that each church must work towards its Eco Church Award. The team had done a good job in highlighting issues and pushing them up to both P.C.C.s and the team council.

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

31. Deanery Synod

Peter Bladon

There have been two meetings of Deanery Synod over the last year. At the first one at St John's Boxmoor the new Diocesan secretary – David White came to introduce himself. He went on to explain the purpose of the Diocesan office in serving the parishes of the Diocese. They look after the

housing for all stipendiary clergy - so they are a massive housing agent as well as looking after the business and finance matters of the Diocese. The Rural Dean gave David a summary of our Deanery and then we had a time of questions from members.

It was agreed that again at this first meeting in 2022 that the Deanery would continue to pay the Zoom subscription of all the Deanery Churches however this would be reviewed for 2023. At this meeting we also received reports from the treasurer and from the standing and pastoral committee.

Finally, we had a sharing session with 1 hope and 1 struggle from each Deanery parish. Our lay chair Rosina Gaddes announced she would be standing down after over 4 years in the role.

The other meeting of 2022 was held at Kings Langley on a beautiful summers evening. At this meeting we welcomed Malcolm Grant, Chair of Trustees at the Beds & Historic Churches Trust. He gave a very interesting talk about the work of the trust in making grants in respect of fabric maintenance and repair to churches with £3.5m being awarded in the last 20 years. This led to questions about how these grants could be applied for. Members were encouraged to get their Churches to support the Bike and Hike event in September each year, as this provided the trust with the bulk of their income. 12 people participated from our Deanery in 2021 raising over £2,000 half of which went back to their own Church.

After the business items for the meeting Fr James told us all about 'Church in the Wild' and we then all out into the churchyard to experience it gathered around the firepit were we all joined together to say the grace and end the meeting.

The Deanery Clergy Chapter continued to meet together and had to face (like us all) another challenging year. However, the Deanery Lay Chapter, did not meet during 2022, 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.

Events

32. Bike & Hike

Rosemary Bladon

This year (with the support of many people) I was able to raise a total of over £600, half of which (£300) came back to St Mary's by getting sponsorship for being at church all day to welcome those who were taking part. We did have quite a few people from across the local area and further afield taking part this year, and it was good to welcome them to St Mary's and refresh them with some drink, biscuits and even some cake! Before sending them on their way on what was a beautiful autumn day!!