



Annual Report

St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden,
St John, Little Walden
& St James, Swards End
A part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry

2022—2023



Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2022-23

Contents

Contents.....	1
St James' Church, Swards End	2
St John's Church, Little Walden	4
Service Planning Group	5
Baptism Team	6
The Guild of the Holy Trinity – the Guild of Servers	6
Welcome Teams.....	7
Music.....	8
Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers	12
Church Flowers.....	14
Sewing Group.....	15
Prayer Team.....	16
Julian Group.....	16
Prospects	16
Book Group	17
Communications Committee.....	17
Parish Office.....	18
Weddings Coordinator.....	19
Children and Youth	20
St. Mary's Pre School.....	26
St. Mary's C.E. Primary School.....	27
St. Mary's Guiding (7thsaffronwaldenguides@gmail.com)	31
Mothers' Union.....	32
Men's Activities	34
Finance Committee	34
Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church	37
Transition Project.....	38
Archive Group.....	39
ECO Team	39
Links with the Worldwide Church:	41
Vision Statement.....	43

Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2022-23

The last twelve months has been a return to the 'new normal' following the Covid years and it has been encouraging to see how active our church has been in carrying out our mission to share God's love.

At last year's elections, Gill Caswell was elected Churchwarden, and Patrick Li, Bill Rose and Jan Siewertson and Pam Russell were elected as her assistants. They have a lot to do and we are very grateful to them for their work.

Edward Gildea, Martin Hugall, Noel Starr, Patrick Li and Denis Tindley were elected as PCC members for another three years, as were Karen Game, who resigned February 2023 and Paddy Carver, who stepped down in March 2023 after a long service. Reverend Ella Harris joined us and attended her first meeting in November. Anna Martin and Steve Hasler were elected as Deanery Synod reps.

It is inspiring to consider all the effort and love demonstrated in the events and processes recorded in the following reports, and the PCC are very grateful to all who have made contributions to our worship, community and environment.

Anna Martin PCC Secretary

St James' Church, Swards End

Last year was really the year we returned to normality after Covid but even then, Communion does not seem quite the same without the chalice being shared amongst us all. Let us hope that returning confidence will allow this shortly.

Our congregation numbers have held up well and include a couple or so of new members which is especially good to see. Our Youth Club restarted and we are very grateful to Matt and all the supporting volunteers that enable this to take place. Coffee mornings have been very well supported and it's like folks are making up for lost time. Chris and Annie Bishop organised a Quiz Night in St Mary's and whilst St James did not win we thoroughly enjoyed losing! Again thanks to those who organise these social gatherings.

News on the fabric side of the church is not so good although it could have been a lot worse. We have encountered the return of woodworm infestation and an area of wet rot in the floor of the

church room itself. The former can be sprayed whereas the area of wet rot needs to be replaced. Treatment and repairs are in hand and we estimate the total costs will be in the region of £5k. Fortunately we have been mindful over the years of the need for a strong Fabric Fund which means we have sufficient money to meet these costs.

Ongoing maintenance and minor repairs remain a regular feature but we are optimistic that we will avoid any further immediate major expenditure, although some roofing work will most likely be the next substantial item.

The church garden is ticking over and the new beech hedge on the east side has taken and looks to be healthy. We do have help from a gardener and have a rota for watering and light work. The two benches in the garden have taken on a new lease of life having been spruced up a bit. We have stripped back a lot of vegetation on the north side and hope to keep that down but it is on our neighbours land and not ours. The neighbours are very helpful and supportive but that area is out of sight for both of us and the excessive growth creeps up on us. Despite the work, our garden is nice to have.

We took part in the village celebrations for the Queens Jubilee and as part of those celebrations held a tea party which was well attended and considered a great success.

Our Services continued to be provided by Chris Bishop and our music by Judith Hasler both of whom we are very grateful to. Special services included Harvest Festival – preceded by Harvest Supper and an excellent Speaker, the Reverend Canon Janet Nicholls – a moving Remembrance Service, a Carol Service in the church and Christmas Carols sung around the tree on the Village Green.

Sadly we lost one of our long term congregation members, John Scott, who will be much missed by us all. His funeral was very well attended and some of his achievements as outlined in the Eulogy made him even more impressive a man than we had even thought. We also conducted a funeral for Angus Armstrong. May they both rest in peace. Contrasting with that, we had a baptism for our member, Judy King's grandchild and a lovely wedding blessing for the Bamber's son Tony and his wife Audrey.

All in all, quite a busy and varied year on the back of Covid. Onwards and upwards.

St John's Church, Little Walden

Since our last annual meeting St John's has seen a change in congregation, minister and church warden. As a church family we are depleted in numbers which means that a greater burden of responsibility lies with fewer people. This can be difficult at times but we continue to work together to carry out God's ministry in this Church, village and wider community.

In our Church: Our Festival services continue to be well attended particularly the carol service with singing in the church yard. We have said goodbye to Michael Lovegrove who has retired once again and we are very grateful for the years of service that he has given to St John's. We have welcomed John Saxon as our new minister and continue to be blessed with Tracey Nicholls to lead our family services.

In our Village: St John's has helped families made homeless after a house fire, we've sold Hot cross Buns on the green, led the Remembrance Day service at the war memorial and financially supported the Village Hall. We are also involved in the life of the village through the WI, Village Hall committee and of course the pub.

In the wider community: St John's has continued to support our chosen charities, Self Help Africa and Farm Crisis UK. We have raised money for Ukraine, Saffron Walden Foodbank as well as financially contributing to the youth work at St Mary's, Eleanor Game's church mission in Israel and the Gardner family in Romania.

Fabric: We are fortunate to have our new Quinquennial report to advise our priorities for the church building. In the next few weeks the trees and bushes in the church yard are going to get a much needed trim.

Going forward we would like to work towards combining the needs of the church and the needs of the community, we believe that this is where our mission lies and to this end we will be praying for guidance, strength and funding

St John's is a small church with a small congregation and as such we are always vulnerable to small changes in our electoral role which can have a huge impact, despite this we are an outward looking church, our building is sound, we are financially secure and

whilst an increase in our congregation would be welcome there is no doubt that God is present in our church and we are guided by his light in all our actions.

Helen and David Nash (Pro Wardens)

Service Planning Group

This Group, originally set up to coordinate the return to services in church following Covid-19 lockdown, was combined with the Worship Committee in November 2021 and now operates as a task group reporting to the PCC and advising the Rector and churchwardens. The Group met six times during 2022. Its work focuses on the logistics of 'special services' as well as advising on wider changes to liturgy to plan services during the year and then review them after the event.

In the early part of 2022, we considered how the lifting of Covid restrictions would enable a return to a full pattern of services in church. This was achieved by Holy Week with most of our pre-Covid schedule taking place. The Easter Eve service was not restarted. It was encouraging to see congregations returning to more normal numbers, a trend which increased throughout the year.

Other areas focused on during the year included

- Introduction of a new baptism liturgy
- Planning of the special civic service for the Platinum Jubilee and the Confirmation service
- A review of afternoon/evening services which resulted in revised monthly pattern: 1st Sunday H2H, 2nd Sunday Choral Evensong, 3rd Sunday Living Stones, 4th Sunday Taize, 5th Sunday Celtic worship.
- Introduction of a less formal morning communion service once a month
- Review and revision of the format of Family Services
- Revision of the Remembrance Day parade service
- Livestreaming of services – we confirmed the importance of continuing to livestream at least one Sunday service each week as well as other special services, such as All Souls.
- Consultation on morning service times across the team resulting in the 10am service moving to 10.30am with effect from January 2023.

Judith Hasler

Baptism Team

2022 saw 23 children and 2 adults baptized at St Mary's, with one of these adult baptisms forming part of October's confirmation service. The midday service remains the more popular option for most families, with just 4 baptisms forming part of the main Sunday morning service. We have already had 5 baptisms at St Mary's in 2023 with several more planned.

There were several occasions of note: In May three cousins were baptized at the same service; in July a Mum and her twin sons were baptized together; in September a baptism that had had to be postponed from April 2020 because of covid finally took place, with the parents, who had been married at St Mary's 10 years previously, renewing their wedding vows at the same service; and in October Ella conducted her first baptism.

In March new liturgy was introduced. Parents and godparents now make four, rather than three, promises on behalf of the child in response to the following questions;

Do you turn away from sin?

Do you reject evil?

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

Do you trust in him as Lord?

You may also have noticed that where there is a baptism in the main morning service the child is presented with their baptism candle and welcomed into the Church by the congregation at the end of the service, thus making the child and their family feel part of the whole service.

My thanks as ever go to the other members of the team, Pamela, Kathryn and Sandra, to Joan, who keeps us supplied with teddies for the children, to those of you who help move the chairs near the font for a midday (now 12.15!) service, and to Gill and Pam who are always there to help.

Lesley Lancaster

The Guild of the Holy Trinity – the Guild of Servers

The Guild of Servers at St Mary's has existed for generations and fulfilled an important role in the liturgy of St Mary's. Since the start of the Covid epidemic, in January 2020, the Guild has needed to operate in a completely new manner.

Traditionally the members of the Guild serve at the services of Holy Communion every Sunday at 08.00am and at 10.30am to support the presiding priest. A small team of Sub-Deacons serve in turn at the 08.00am (1662) Holy Communion. A bigger group have traditionally provided a team at the 10.30a.m Eucharist. We, the Servers, are conscious that, in assisting the priest at the Altar, we are also leading the congregation in worship. The Guild draws its members from all areas of the Church family of St Mary's, and St

James and St John's – the PCC, welcomers, sidemen and women, bell-ringers, the Baptism group, and others.

Since 'lock-down' the administration of the Communion elements has changed. Now Communion is given from the bottom of the Chancel steps by the priest and one sub-deacon only, and with a minimum of ritual – no procession, no offertory, and no ablutions at the end. With one only sub-deacon needed to assist the priest, the number of Sundays a member of the Guild is asked to serve has reduced noticeably. The current format has required a revision of the notes for servers (instructions on the performance of the ritual). These revised notes are now with the Rector and we await his comments and revisions.

During this recent period a number Guild members have retired and I wish to record our sincere thanks for the years of faithful service given by Pamela Mugliston and Tim Game. Although we are fortunate to have a good small core of servers, we all also have other responsibilities in St Mary's, or in other Churches. To balance these various commitments, members serve only on Sundays when they are free of other church and/or family commitments. However now, we need two or three people to serve at the 10.30am Holy Communion services. If you are interested in assisting in worship by becoming a Server serving at the Altar, please do contact me. We are happy to welcome new members.

Noel Starr

Welcome Teams

St Mary's Team of Welcomers have had another busy year, things are improving following the covid restrictions although there were still changes as we went through the year. Having spent time preparing for the services the whole team enjoy greeting people as they arrive for all of our services during the year, morning, afternoon or evening and are ready to help in any way they can. They will do their best to help with any queries or direct you to someone who can and of course they are there tidying everything away after the service.

We have over 30 people involved in the 8am and 10.30am services some doing two shifts a month. There are of course many other services during the course of the year, especially at Christmas and 2022 was a particularly busy one but we managed. Teams for the special services can be as large as 14 so we are grateful for all the help we receive.

We published the new Ministry of Welcome document for all the Welcomers this year and already there have been changes but we are an adaptable team. The document consists of 18 pages and is for the use of the Team Leaders and all the Welcomers so you can imagine the number of tasks involved, not arduous but necessary to make everything run smoothly.

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

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

Pamela Mugliston

Music

It has been another busy year and the choirs continue to recover well from 'the Covid experience'. At the time of writing this report, both Junior and Senior choir numbers remain strong, though there is always work to be done to ensure that this continues to be the case. There is no room for complacency. It has been pleasing to see that the choirs have largely responded well to some fairly significant changes to the music provision within our services. It is important to keep in mind that we are all on a journey when singing and playing in church.

The Junior Choir has recently gone from strength to strength and are developing into a close-knit group which works hard and produces a beautiful sound. Numbers are strong, though not quite what they were pre-pandemic and retention of children is noticeably more of a concern in 2023 than it was in 2020. The Juniors held a successful recruitment evening in the summertime which attracted a lot of local attention. They also had a stall at the Christmas fair and sang for a large number of services over the year. Patricia our former head chorister has now become a choral scholar and it has been a pleasure to promote Alex to the position of head chorister – she is carrying out her role with diligence and enthusiasm. The Juniors recently ran a cake stall in the town centre with the aim of raising funds for a trip to Ely cathedral to hear the girls' choir. Alison Lawrence has helped

tirelessly over the year and my thanks go to her for her stupendous ongoing efforts.

Lizzie, our wonderful Joyful Noise leader, writes “After starting up again in Autumn 2021, Joyful Noise has met regularly throughout term time. At the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year we sent four youngsters to join the ranks of the Junior Choir and they all seem to be thoroughly enjoying the experience! We currently have five singers, having unfortunately lost a couple to changes in family situations. Since January 2023, we have also been joined by one of the more senior choristers from the Junior ranks who is volunteering as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. We could do with having more new members. Currently three singers are from St Mary’s School (on Castle Street), one is from KSS and the fifth is a former St Mary’s pupil who now attends a school in Much Hadham. It would be lovely to have a wider range of schools represented! Many thanks to Lizzie for her tremendous efforts with this important group.

This year inevitably saw movement from within our Choral Scholar ranks; we lost George (who has gone on to Durham University, having been awarded a Vice Chancellor’s music scholarship), Helena who has gone on to study Drama in Birmingham, and we also said goodbye to Eleanor who has gone on to Israel to join in the Church’s Ministry among Jewish People. We feel quite sure they will pop back whenever they can!

We also had the annual Choral Scholars’ concert – there were performances from choral scholars both past and present, and I think all were struck at the wealth of talent from within the ranks; we were treated to solos, duets and ensembles – what a joyous occasion.

It is good to see that the adult choir is mostly full on-paper, and singing well too, though attendance over the year has proved to be slightly concerning at times. My hope is that this might improve in the near future. The choirs sang for a number of large services and events over the year. There is insufficient space to itemise everything here, though some highlights include: Mozart Requiem (sung in partnership with the East Anglia Chamber Orchestra), a number of simply stunning choral evensongs, two civic services, and a whole raft of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany services. My grateful thanks to our wonderful librarians Margaret Jacobs, Siong Siong and Jim Butler for their tireless support and hard work over the year.

The Brass Group has continued to play for a number of services including, Easter Day Eucharist, the Civic Service for Queen’s Jubilee

and Christmas carol service. The associated quintet has also given a concert and performed at the Christmas fair. At the time of writing, future events include the Easter day service and at least one concert later in the year – watch this space! Thanks go to Phil Dudfield for his help with running this group.

Yechan, our organ scholar has gone from strength to strength, and I now find it difficult at times, knowing who is actually ‘on the keys’ up in the organ loft. I am pleased that Yechan decided, at our invitation, to stay at St Mary’s for a second year. Yechan is hoping to continue his organ playing beyond here as he looks to move to university in September. We wish him the very best with his ongoing musical and academic journey and look forward to hearing more from his endeavours in the future.

This year was an important year for the SMMA in that it saw the return of the Lunchtime Concert series – the first since pre-Covid times. Our audiences seemed to grow as the series went on, which was incredibly pleasing. We welcomed several performers who had been due to perform in 2020 when the world stopped for a bit! There were a number of stand-out concerts for me – it was particularly special to welcome Elliot Randall – former Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar – back to perform a recital for us – how far he has continued to come on! We also enjoyed outstanding performances from various students from Saffron Walden County High School – these students were so tremendously grateful to be given the opportunity to perform after missing these opportunities throughout Covid, and so delighted to perform in our beautiful church.

As ever, music proves itself to be such a perfect catalyst for bringing communities together, and in the case of St Mary’s, for bringing them into our church. Of course, we also enjoyed a fabulous performance given by our very own Diana Hoy – a stunning way to end a successful series! We were then treated to a fabulous Organ Plus recital given by Oli and Guy and Kate Llewellyn on French Horn and Trumpet. One thing which struck me was how at each of these concerts we had a mix of new faces and regular faces, and how perfect it was that we reach out to all. A number of people told me how delighted they were that our concerts were back and how they really are the highlight of each week during the summer months, so it seems our efforts are more than worthwhile – for the financial implications to the SMMA and for our outreach work in our roles as disciples of Christ.

Covid having been responsible for us not awarding our SMMA Bursary for a couple of years, we decided this year to offer the bursary once again. This is a bursary of £250 which can be used to purchase music, instrumental lessons or be used to help purchase an instrument. We had two most deserving applications and felt that since we had not given the award for a couple of years, both applicants should be recipients, we were delighted to offer the full bursary to both Eden Faith and Isaac Game – we felt their tireless commitment to the musical life of the church deserved reward.

And we have finished the year on a high! Our first Coffee Concert – a new venture – took place this week and was well-received. I am hopeful that this mini-series of concerts can help to boost SMMA accounts and continue to enable us to support the musical life of the church.

The organ continues to provide the lion share of support for our musical activities at church, though the condition of the instrument continues to deteriorate on a yearly basis. In the Autumn, the PCC agreed to the formation of a subcommittee with the aim of drawing up a statement of needs and recommendations for subsequent 'next steps' to be taken. It is still very early days though I hope to report back in the future about our progress with this project. My thanks go to Peter De Vile for continuing to manage to keep this large instrument in roughly working order – I am aware that this is an ever-increasing uphill struggle for him and am tremendously grateful for his ongoing efforts.

Looking forward into 2024, we are tremendously excited to be in the early planning stages for a potential large schools outreach performance of 'Noyes' Fludde' by Benjamin Britten. This would likely take place in the first half of 2024 and involve a considerable number of children and young people from the town community. I hope to report more back on this in the very near future.

My grateful thanks go to Hannah Razzell (our new SMMA Chair) and the SMMA committee, also to everyone who helps with our musical life at St Mary's. To Gill Gibson our wardrobe mistress, to Patrick Li for his help with virtually everything, to our musicians in the family service band, Taizé group and other instrumentalists, to Bron Ferland for her continued help as music administrator, and to Jim Butler for his enormous help with our publicity.

We would like to thank Jeremy Allen for his help with playing the organ, acting as key role model for the organ scholar, for his

conducting and deputising, and most of all, for his friendship, advice and wisdom.

Lastly, we would like to thank Jeremy Trew for his continued support and ongoing encouragement of our choirs and music. His friendly support and approachable wisdom and leadership are much appreciated by all.

Hannah Razzell
SMMA Chair

Oli King
Director of Music and Organist

Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers

Over the past year, in addition to our normal routine of Sunday services, other service ringing and practice nights, there was ringing for weddings and funerals, peals and quarter peals, 2 open tower events, Great Ringing Day and the tower outing.

Ringling for Services. We rung on all the Sundays during the year with attendance varying from 5 to 10 people. For most Sunday mornings we rung either 6 or 8 bells. We also rang for the second Sunday Evensong often ringing all 12 bells.

Ringling for Special Occasion. In such a historic year for our country we rung for the following significant events:

6 February - 70th anniversary of the Accession of HM Queen Elizabeth II;

5 June - Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II;

9 September - death of HM Queen Elizabeth II;

10 September - the Proclamation of HM King Charles III;

18 September - Civic Service in memory of HM Queen Elizabeth II;

19 September - tenor tolled 96 times prior to the funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

(6 February)

Weddings and Funerals.



We rung for 9 weddings held in the church and 2 at the Town Hall and one funeral. Ringing for the weddings was always call changes on the back 8 and we rung all 12 bells for the funeral of Canon John Sibson, a past Chaplain of the Essex Association of Change Ringers.

Peals and Quarter Peals.

There were 2 peals rung during the year, one of Cambridge S Maximus for HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and one of Grandsire Caters. There were no peals by visiting bands. Nine local band quarter peals were rung, all prior to Sunday Evensong and one by a visiting band.

Great Ringing Day.

For Great Ringing Day 2022 we held a walk and ring event, starting at Rickling, ringing at 5 towers with lunch at Wendens Ambo and a guided walk through the Audley End Estate.

The day ended with a social event.



Tower Outing. The tower outing was a walking tour of Norwich. We rung all the rings of bells in the city, no mean feat given the difficulty in accessing some of the towers. It proved to be very popular with both ringers and non-ringers alike and final numbers were in excess to 25.

Open Towers Events. As part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, on 2 June we held a tower open day. The event had 2 aims: to foster better community relations and to attract people interested in learning to ring. We were overwhelmed with people visiting the tower, but there have not been any resultant people wishing to learn ringing. We also opened the tower to visitors for the church Christmas Fair and, once again, many people climbed the tower.

*Stephen Wood, Secretary, Saffron
Walden Society of Change Ringers*

Church Flowers

During the past year limited flowers have been arranged in the Church with the exception of Advent and Lent.

Flowers were arranged for the death of the Queen and the Thanksgiving Service.

During the year under the care of Jane Knight a number of wedding flowers were undertaken. A big thank you to Jane for undertaking wedding flowers. The highlight of the past year was the 'arch' above the West Door for Rebecca Tomlinson's wedding and which, with the addition of red, white and blue ribbons, enhanced the Church for the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Flower prices continue to rise, and sadly members of the team are getting older. Thank you to Diane Golding for her loyal service as she decided to retire.

The rota has quite a few gaps and new members are needed - help would be given. Men, do not be shy in coming forward!

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

I am now in my 23rd year as co-ordinator.

Pam Russell

Sewing Group

We must now have been going for over 45 years so we have seen quite a lot of coming and going one way and another.

One of the most exciting things about our group is that when people first join they always say they don't know how to do canvas work but in no time they are hooked along with all the set backs (like unpicking hours of work when a mistake has been discovered.) We have all "been there" so it is very bonding.

We invite anyone to request a kneeler either in memory of someone or to commemorate an occasion like a wedding or baptism. The cost is £40 a kneeler. The Friends of the Church subsidise the canvas and the wool.

We have had to do some repair work after the Pandemic when the kneelers had to be piled up on one side out of use. Unfortunately the moth had a hay day and even a mouse or two had a nibble. So that has had to be repaired.

As well as all stitching away together every Monday morning we are almost a book club, a gardening club and a recipe exchange club as much as all else.

A very happy start to the week

If you have any requests, please contact Tessa Hawkes 523888

Tessa Hawkes

Prayer Team

2022 was a year of change for the Prayer Team, as Sue Walker, leader for six years, stepped down and her role was taken over by Hazel Colebrooke. We give thanks for Sue's faithful and inspiring leadership.

Advent 2022 saw us providing two Prayer Spaces in church for a week, and we are planning another Prayer Space for the period of *Thy Kingdom Come 2023*, which covers the ten days between Ascension and Pentecost. We are also hoping to put on a Quiet Morning in December as we reflect together and look forward to Christmas and the Incarnation of Jesus. Look out for these events!

We are very grateful to our team member, Judith Felgate, who does sterling work revising the Prayer Leaflet available in church and also keeping the Prayer Diary up to date - it will be revised again after the APCM. Thank you Judith!

The Prayer Team as a whole is also involved in providing the monthly prayer for Parish News. The work we do is always underpinned by prayer and we spent a morning at Clare Priory earlier this year to pray for our work as a team and for St Mary's; Jesus said 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...'

Hazel Colebrooke

Julian Group

The group carries on much the same as ever.

We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 7pm at The Priory, Common Hill, Saffron Walden. A small group. We read a passage from Mother Julian's 'Enfolded in Love' followed by half an hour of silence after which we discuss what was read (or maybe not) and close with a prayer at eight o'clock.

It is all very simple and anyone is welcome to join.

For any information please contact Tessa Hawkes. 523888

Tessa Hawkes

Prospects

This group did not meet during 2022 - and has not done so since the Covid lockdown. There are hopes that it can restart soon but there will be nothing to report for 2022.

Judith Hasler

Book Group

St Mary's Book Group has continued to meet once a month on a Friday, over tea and coffee. The books we discuss come on loan from Saffron Walden Library. All our books are chosen by the members. We mix recent books such as the surreal fantasy *Piranesi* with biographies and classic novels. Over the past year we have read Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* and *The Promise* by Damon Galgut, and we also explored the character of the clergy through the autobiography of the radio personality the Revd Richard Coles, *Fathomless Riches*, and a gallery of eccentrics and quite unsuitable clerics in *A Field Guide to the English Clergy*. *The Power of the Dog* and *The Giver of Stars* took us to dramatic events in rural America. Stephen Fry's *Troy* was heavier going, relieved by John Masefield's (scary) children's classic *The Box of Delights*.

Robin O'Neill

Communications Committee

There are 7 of us on this committee which meets 4 times a year. Rufus Barnes stepped down as chair early in the year after 5 years of admirable service and Martin Hugall took over this role. Patrick Li joined the committee and his help with the website, especially with recording and uploading sermons, is much appreciated.

I am pleased to be involved in keeping the website up to date and with its continual expansion and evolution. Google Analytics indicate that it is well used by visitors and the 12 most popular pages in order are: the Grapevine, Latest News, Who's Who & Contact, Music pages, Services pages, Parish News, Sermons and Media, Calendar, History and Guides, How to Find Us, New to Church, and Children and Young People; and at Christmas the Christmas Services page is very popular. Thanks to Clifford Want for also keeping the 'A Church Near You' website up to date with our details.

We are pleased to have been able to assist in the London to Walsingham Pilgrimage Camino with the design of the Pilgrim Stamp and its positioning at the west end of the church and associated publicity.

Many thanks to Andy Colebrooke for his skilful editing of the Parish News which since the pandemic has been able to incorporate more home articles of interest. Since October 2019 it has had a colour cover and on the website in full colour, and hard copies have been

free with printing costs covered by advertisers. Recently our advertising revenue has dropped a bit but the PCC has come to our rescue, recognising that it is an important means of outreach. Thanks to Rufus Barnes for his help with advertisers.

The updating of the various leaflets at the back of the church is a continuous job and we have recently incorporated the content of the Healing leaflet into the Prayer one and included more email addresses in all of them. Particular thanks to Clifford Want for his help with the formatting of these and to Jim Butler with the general leaflet in the Tourist Information Centre.

Clifford Want has continued to do a splendid job as our Press Officer and his press releases have ensured that St Mary's is regularly featured in the local press.

We have been happy to join with the other churches in Saffron Walden in joint adverts of our Christmas and Easter services as this not only saves money but brings us closer together.

We have approved the wording for our new external Notice Boards and are aware that more work needs to be done to get the design approved by the various authorities before going to tender.

Thanks to Judith Felgate for her imaginative displays and control of the various display boards, to Dawn Saxon for our essential link with the Parish Office, and to Liz Lingley as our secretary for her professional and accurate minute taking.

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

Martin Hugall Chair, Communications Committee

Parish Office

We have had another busy year in the parish office. A big thank you to all our volunteers who come in to help, copy, collate, set heating, testing alarms and a host of other duties – where would we be without you. Volunteers generally tend to come in on the same day each week which has helped enormously and they are back on 4 mornings of the week.

A wonderful addition to our Office Team has been Clare Dunn as Assistant Administrator who works Tuesday to Friday mornings in our office 'the Hub' downstairs in the parish rooms as do I. It is good to work with Claire and I know a lot of you talk to her about grapevine, service sheets and funerals in particular.

*Dawn Saxon
Parish Administrator*

Weddings Coordinator

There were 21 weddings in total in 2022 – ten at Saffron Walden, three each at Wenden and Ashdon, two at Great Chesterford and one each at Hadstock, Wimbish and Little Chesterford and a wedding blessing at Swards End.

It was a pleasure to welcome back the Tomlinson family to St Mary's, Saffron Walden for Sam and Becca's wedding in May. It was a beautiful wedding. Jane Knight and her team created a magnificent flower arch over the West door and Sam and Becca recited their vows from memory which couples rarely have the nerve to do but was very special. Tim Hardingham's son, Daniel married Rebekah at St Mary's, Wenden which was poignant and emotional for many in the congregation.

In 2023, we are expecting 19 weddings, mostly in the village churches. We managed to catch up on all the weddings postponed due to Covid restrictions which was a great relief and the Marriage Preparation in February was a happy occasion where couples mingled once again and shared their feelings of nervous anticipation and joyful expectation in advance of their weddings.

I feel it is a great privilege to work within the team ministry with Jeremy, John and Alex as we guide the couples through the process leading up to and including their wedding day. I am, as ever, grateful to Dawn and Claire for their efficient help in the parish office and to Pam Russell and Jan Siewertsen for serving as vergers for all the Saffron Walden weddings last year.

Caroline Goulder, Wedding Coordinator



Figure 1 The Arch of flowers for Sam and Becky's Wedding

Children and Youth

Tinies

Tinies has had a fantastic year, welcoming many new children and parents. We begin with tea and toast, providing an opportunity for the adults to chat while the children engage in play. There's always a craft available, allowing the children to explore their creative side and make a mess! Our time together concludes with a small service of singing, dancing, a Bible story, and prayers at the front of the church.

Throughout the year, we've had the pleasure of being joined by the reception class at St Mary's School. It has been great to welcome a couple of Ukrainian mums to Tinies, and it's been heart warming to see how our regular attendees have come together to support them.

It's been a wonderful year of building relationships with both the children and adults, and we look forward to more exciting times ahead. The team has been instrumental in creating a friendly and engaging atmosphere, and I am truly grateful to have them on board.

Team JC

Each Sunday, Team JC gathers for a morning of fun and learning, complete with chocolate waffles, bible stories, games, and crafts. In September we started with Adam and worked our way through the Old Testament, focussing on who God sent to help the Israelites, and how they all link and point to Jesus. We ended on how God sends us out into the world to be his disciples, loving the world. Recently we have been focussing on holy week and looking at what Jesus did between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

The most enjoyable part for me is to hear the children share with everybody what they have learnt in front of church. The children absorb so much and it is a great privilege to watch them grow in their faith and to be a part of their discipleship.

At Team JC, we are always in need of more volunteers to help. If you have a passion for creativity and storytelling, enjoy getting messy, or simply want to see what we do, please don't hesitate to chat with me about volunteering.

Aftershock | Weekend Away | Jimmy's Meal | DTI

Aftershock has been going really well. At the start of each term, we work with the young people to design the programme for the term. During these planning sessions, they choose what they would like to explore, whether that be a book of the bible or bible character which interests them, or a big question they may have.

Throughout the year, we've focused on what Jesus did between his resurrection and ascension, and also explored Joseph's story, which was particularly relevant for some of our members as they were involved in the Saffron Walden Musical Theatre Company.

Over the past term we have looked at Holy Week and even had our own Passover Meal.

As well as bible studies we also go out on trips which have included; Adventure Golf, Jump Street and Escape Rooms. I'm happy to report that during our latest Escape Rooms adventure, everyone managed to escape!

A group of young people joined us at our Church Weekend Away in May. We had a great weekend spending some quality time with each other, learning about the Wedding at Cana, but also playing lots of games including what seemed to be a lot of tennis!

This year saw the return of the Jimmy's Meal where the young people put on a three course meal with entertainment. It was a new cohort of young people, most of whom had never been part of a Jimmy's Meal before. But this didn't stop them from going all out and putting so much effort into decorating the hall and preparing the food, not forgetting the amazing entertainment and waiting on the guests. The evening would not have been possible if it was not for Tracey Nicholls, Helen Nash and Nic Williamson who cooked up a storm in the kitchen. My thanks also goes to Dave and Phoebe Nash who helped in the kitchen. It was great to have Barry Griffiths and Sara Dunn join us again and share about the work of Jimmy's. Once again, thank you to all those who came along and supported Jimmy's and the young people. The evening was a great success which raised £2450 for the work of Jimmy's.

This summer we are attending DTI Youth Festival (Dreaming the Impossible) on Staffordshire Showground. We will be joining up with our friends at the Community Church. DTI is about inspiring and equipping young people to love God, love others and change the world. At DTI we worship Jesus, hear some great teaching from the Bible and spend loads of time learning how to pray for each other and hanging out in God's presence. Outside of the main meetings we have a jampacked schedule, with sports, creative workshops, seminars, cafes, live music, inflatables and fairground rides! We will be putting on some fundraising events to raise money to go towards the young people's food and transport. If you feel like you would like to support them, please speak to me.

Youth Bible Study

At the end of the last academic year we said a sad farewell to a brilliant group of young adults as they headed off to University or went abroad. It was an honour to see these young people grow in their faith throughout their teens and to see them grown in their love for God and his Word.

With one group leaving we had the opportunity to team up with Katie Boyce who leads the youth work at the community church. We have a great group of 10 young people who gather weekly to dive deeper into Bible discussions while enjoying some hot chocolate and marshmallows. Over the year we have followed two courses, the first from 24/7 prayer called Origins and the second which we have just finished is The Bible Society's 'The Bible Course'. My thanks go to Tom Hunt and Katie Boyce for their help in leading and their valuable contributions.

H2H

H2H continues to be a great opportunity for the young people to lead a service in their own style. Typically, the theme for H2H corresponds to the topics we have been exploring in Aftershock in recent weeks, such as Joseph and Holy week in the past year. During our September H2H event, we came together to pray for the young people who were departing for University and Israel. We are so thankful for those who come out on a Sunday evening to support our amazing young people as they use their gifts to lead us in worship and teaching at H2H.

Mentoring In County High | Advent Assembly

Over the past year I have continued to volunteer with SVST in the mentoring scheme in County High. I see eight young people who have been referred due to an issue they are facing, whether that be in school, for example with their behaviour, or struggles with their confidence. Others have situations at home which they would like to talk to someone about. All the young people I mentor are great and it is brilliant to be able to invest in their lives in some way and help them deal with the issues they are facing.

The Ministry Team were also asked to lead an advent assembly for all the year groups at County High. This was a great opportunity to share the true meaning of Christmas to all the pupils there. It was brilliant to work together with the clergy from the village churches too.

Primary Schools | On Track | Mentoring | SWAT | Easter Workshop and Soul Spaces

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

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

The SWAT – Saffron Walden Assemblies Team, goes into most of the primary schools in Saffron Walden and the surrounding area, putting on a fun filled bible-based assembly. It is great to have so many open doors into the schools in and around Saffron Walden. I currently lead this team and organise assemblies and dates with the schools. If you would like to join us as we take Jesus into the primary schools in the area, then please talk to me.

Easter Workshop and Soul Spaces is a new initiative from SVST taking the true meaning of Easter into some of the local primary schools. I helped with this at Radwinter, Debden, Wimbish and St Mary's School. The morning included an interactive and engaging workshop looking at four main parts of the Easter Story, Palm Sunday, Last Supper, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. During the afternoon the hall was transformed with prayer stations for the children to reflect on the Easter story further.

Sewards End Youth Club

Once a month St James Church in Swards End host a youth club which I help to run. Since restarting after Covid we have been at full capacity and even had a waiting list. The strong links to Radwinter School, through going in as part of the SWAT team, and also having Sue Powell, an ex teacher at Radwinter, means the young people know us really well. Through the youth club, we have extended invitations to families to attend Remembrance Day and Christmas services at St. James', with the young people also participating in the service. At the remembrance service, we created a wreath that was laid at the memorial.

Growing Young Leaders | Master Supervisor

For the past eight years I have helped lead the Diocese run 'Growing Young Leaders' course with Dot Salmon the Diocese Youth Advisor. The course attracts young leaders from all corners of the Diocese and we meet four times a year to explore what being a leader is all about. Each young person is assigned a mentor to encourage them in their leadership at their home church. In November we went on a weekend away to Fellowship Afloat in Tollesbury which is great fun and a brilliant chance to get to know the young people better and to invest more in their leadership.

I have also had the pleasure of supervising a Masters student in her diploma in youth work at De Montfort University in Leicester. This has been a great experience helping someone who is also passionate about youth work to reflect on the work she is doing as well as to encourage her in her work.

Thank You!

As you have just read, it has been a fun filled year in the life of the children and youthwork at St Mary's Church. This could have only happened thanks to some amazing volunteers and therefore my heartfelt thanks for their love and support goes to; Tracey Nicholls, Helen Nash, David Nash, Phoebe Nash, Sarah Buchallet, Hilary Walker, Tom Hunt, Ellie Chambers, Chris Cowling, Hazel Colebrooke, Pam Russell, Sue Birchall, Sheilah Girgis, Gill Caswell, Gillian Brace, Jamie and Ro Biddlecombe, Harry, Steph Hall, Val Bowtle, Hazel Rayfield, Katie Boyce and Mark and Gillian Hopton and of course my wonderful wife, Nicola.

As you can see there is so much happening with our children and young people, and as the well known passage goes, the harvest is

plentiful but the workers are few. This is true for many ministries in the church but particularly the childrens and youthwork. Without volunteers it isn't safe for us to run the groups we run. If you would like to help with any of our children and young people's activities, I would be really happy to chat to you more about what we do and how you can get involved. Even if you are unsure what you can offer, there are many different roles and tasks, regular and occasional, so please do get in touch.

Matt Williamson

St. Mary's Pre School

When Maxine Fenwick was appointed as Manager with Lisa Wightman as her Deputy, they and the Committee knew it would be a difficult time for Preschool as we emerged from the pandemic but we had not realised quite what challenges we would be facing. In March 2022 two practitioners resigned including one of our full-time staff and, shortly afterwards, Maxine also resigned.

It soon became clear that recruiting a new Manager as well as additional practitioners was not going to be easy. There were a number of other settings in the Saffron Walden area which were also advertising and our own experience when we recruited Maxine had shown there was unlikely to be many applicants. Indeed, the Committee received only 2 applicants of which 1 was interviewed who was a new and relatively inexperienced Preschool manager. After consulting our Early Years Advisor at Essex County Council and our Early Years Advisor at Chelmsford Diocese, we decided not to appoint this applicant.

At this point, the Committee felt it had to plan for the worst; that we would not have a Manager when Maxine left so, in accordance with OFSTED requirements, we would not be able to continue to operate.

While pursuing recruiting a new manager, we were also approached by Olivers Lodge, a local Breakfast Club and After School provider, who are expanding into preschool provision. Their proposal was to take over the provision so all staff would be transferred to them under a TUPE agreement. The places for all our children would also be secured.

When considering the future for St Mary's Church Preschool, uppermost in our thoughts was to do the best for the parents and their children and our staff. We were acutely aware of the importance of St Mary's Church Preschool to Saffron Walden and its reputation as a

caring, community Preschool particularly with those children with additional needs. The applicant we interviewed was a strong candidate but we had to be sure we could give them the support they needed in what is a very demanding job. Financially, we had managed to breakeven in the last few years but it becomes more difficult every year.

The Committee spoke to our Business Management Consultant and the Childrens Community Development Lead at Essex County Council to get their advice. They agreed that COVID and the increased cost of living has had a huge impact on the Early Years sector. Other factors, such as minimum national wage, are also putting a strain on the viability and sustainability of all settings.

The Committee voted that the best way forward was to propose that Olivers Lodge took over the provision and an Extra Ordinary General meeting was held on 31 May 2022 when the Resolutions that the Preschool provision was transferred to Olivers Lodge Limited and that St Mary's Church Pre-school Limited was dissolved were carried by 26 members for, 1 against and 1 abstention. Following a consultation period, the setting opened as Olivers Lodge Preschool in September 2022. I am pleased to say that Maxine has been employed by Olivers Lodge and leads the Preschool team at the Pavilion.

Our remaining funds have been distributed to local settings who provide services for pre-school aged children and have a similar management structure and objects as St Mary's Church Preschool.

These include other pre-schools and nurseries as well as small play groups.

Sandra Marsh

St. Mary's C.E. Primary School

2022 started in similar vein to how 2021 finished with the Covid virus severely impacting the normal operation of the school. At its peak in the Spring Term around 20% of both staff and pupils were having to self-isolate at home. The teachers and support staff did a brilliant job keeping the school open and safe and providing home learning for the children. They showed great flexibility, ingenuity and commitment to keep education alive in extremely challenging and stressful circumstances. Indeed, thanks go to the whole school

community as parents/carers and the children themselves played their part in overcoming the many difficulties faced.

January saw a change in the chair of the school board of governors with John Westnedge, a foundation governor, replacing Vicky Boraster-Sharpe who was a parent governor. Later in the year a long-standing governor well known in St Mary's Church circles, Richard Peet, also retired from the board. Both Vicky and Richard served the school brilliantly with dedication, commitment and cheerfulness. More details about the Board of Governors can be found in the Our School Community section of the school website – www.stmaryssw.org.uk.

Just as the school was getting through the Covid disruption, towards the end of February, the next incident blew in. Huge storms, cold winds and hail caused damage to the school with trees blown over and large roofing panels from the reception outdoor play area found many metres away on the sports field.

Fortunately, no one was hurt and all was resolved quickly and a far more secure structure put in place.

Thank goodness it wasn't all doom and gloom. Being a pupil at St Mary's comes with lots of good things too. The school plays host to many visitors during the year who come to supplement the academic part of the curriculum for the children. Two such visits were from James Ketchell the explorer and two local police constables Jasmine Thorndyke and Conor Fields.





James is the only person to have climbed Mt Everest, cycled round the world and rowed solo across the Atlantic in succession. He thrilled and engaged the

children with stories of his adventures around the world emphasising the importance of some of the school's values of resilience, perseverance and kindness. He also brought along lots of his kit for the children to try on and even got them to try some of his special dried adventurer food.



The two police constables came into school to bring to life examples of careers open to children when they leave school so they are better informed about choices available to them. Their talk also homed in on two school values – respect and trust – and so helped the pupils understand the different roles and activities that police officers have to fulfil whilst on duty.



The school believes it is equally important to take the children out of school to visit places of interest to reinforce their learning in the classroom. Two such visits were to Colchester Zoo and the local reading library.

The zoo provided the opportunity to see wild animals at close quarters. The penguins, giraffes, elephants, rhinos, lions, tigers and monkeys were the favourites. The children learned about the animals' homeland including terrain and

climate, habitat and diet and a whole lot more.



The autumn term of 2022 saw the launch of the Essex Year of Reading which is part of a countywide campaign to help children discover a love of reading and ensure every child can read at their age level or better. It's part of a programme to help children recover from the possible impact of Covid.

The school's response to this initiative was to arrange a visit to Saffron Walden Library for each class in the school and it is hoped that there will be a visit for each class every term. The children will learn how books are filed on the shelves by subjects or categories and



test their learning with quizzes and 'find that book' challenges. It is hoped that most children will join the library as a result of these visits.

Finally a few points on school performance in 2022. The school's Good Level of Development results for Reception pupils and also the phonics results for pupils in Year 1 were excellent and above national percentages. This was a fantastic achievement bearing in mind many of these young pupils had missed a substantial portion of their classroom teaching during the various COVID lockdowns. The end of Key Stage 1 SATs assessments also saw really solid results and the children should be really proud of the progress they made in challenging times. Pupils in Year 4 did incredibly well in the Multiplication tests in June and the Year 6 pupils also performed brilliantly and outscored all national scores, reflecting some consistent hard work during their time at the school. A very pleasing year academically given two years of Covid related turmoil.

During the year, the school also introduced three key words: Safe, Effort and Respect. It was great to see that these important concepts were quickly and firmly embedded in the school and,

pleasingly, the children's behaviour continued to be brilliant with lots of outstanding examples of politeness and good manners on show for whoever is visiting the school.

So, all-in-all, the year saw the school strike a really good balance between classroom (and home) learning and real world experiences. It's a happy school!

John Westnedge, Chair of Governors

St. Mary's Guiding (7thsaffronwaldenguides@gmail.com)

St. Mary's Rainbows

A recent recruitment drive has sent us one new leader, so we are able to continue, however we are taking it term by term, due to a volunteer shortage, so if anyone would like to join our team, they would be most welcome.

This year our Rainbows have been busy doing lots of badges and different activities. We have visited the Maze and tried not to get lost and had many walks around the Churchyard looking at the flowers. Last term we completed a 'book lover' interest badge and visited the library as one of the activities. We have done printing, painting and card making, we have played ball games and circle games and practiced skipping.

We continue to have a busy waiting list, five of whom are going to be able to join this term, when we are going to start with celebrating the coronation.

Saffy Lester – Rainbow leader

7thsaffrowaldenrainbows@gmail.com

St. Mary's Brownies

Our numbers have been good throughout this last year, and we have some very enthusiastic Brownies. Since our last report five of our members have been awarded their Brownie Gold award, which is very exciting, it meant each girl doing 12 badges and over 1,080 minutes of activities since they joined us. Several other Brownies have now been awarded Bronze and Silver awards too. Whilst working towards these awards we have all completed the Speaking Out interest badge, meaning we each chose a topic that we were concerned about, the environment was a popular choice, we then looked at different ways that individually we can raise awareness for our cause and made mini advert scripts, and petitions, before practicing our letter writing skills.

We have had some adventures over the year too, some of the Brownies came to a sleepover at Skreens park, where they had fun doing climbing and kayaking. We also joined other local Brownies at a special screening of the film Matilda in December.

We are looking forward this year to celebrating the coronation of King Charles at the start of this summer term, having celebrated and then mourned the late Queen over the past year.

If anyone would like to come and help us, please do make contact

Julie Lester – Brownie Leader

7thswst.marysbrownies@gmail.com

Guides

We have had an active and successful year with lots of enthusiastic new members joining us. In the Summer Term we welcomed two girls from Ukraine to our unit and held a very enjoyable

Platinum Jubilee party. We took advantage of the lovely weather by doing mostly outdoor programme activities such as a penny hike and a Town Trail while working towards our Explore theme award.

We started the Autumn Term with nine keen new members. They have all entered enthusiastically into our activities. We also welcomed a new adult helper, Sarah, who comes every other week. With her help we were able to run two different programme activities at the same time suitable for both the older and younger members.

In the Spring Term we welcomed three girls from our own Brownie unit and worked towards the First Aid theme award which most of the girls have now achieved. The year culminated in March with a sleepover at the Girlguiding Outdoor Activities Centre in Norfolk, where eleven girls spent a wonderful weekend living together and doing four different adventurous activities including climbing and zipwire.

During the year we have been extremely grateful for the support of four of our older Guides who have volunteered to be Rainbow and Brownie helpers. We are hoping to reopen the Ranger unit in September so that the older Guides can stay in Guiding and hopefully move on to leadership.

Margaret Jacobs

Mothers' Union

The Mothers Union meets monthly throughout the year and the meetings consist of Worship, Speakers or Social occasions.

Worship

We visit Berden in April for a Holy Week Meditation by the Rev'd Margaret Davis and celebrate Ascension Day with a Festival service in May. In June we hold a service to remember our overseas link branches and pay tribute to the Worldwide work of the Mothers Union and in September our Chaplain leads our members in a corporate communion. In December we hold an Advent service of meditation.

On behalf of the members, we thank the clergy who have been our guest preachers and our Chaplain for giving us their time, support and encouragement.

Speakers.

The subjects covered by our speakers were 'Visiting and Living in Israel,'

'My Journey to Ordination,' 'Personal Security and Avoiding Fraud,' and 'The Development of the Foodbank.'

Social

Members enjoyed a visit to Ashdon Museum 'Walking Down Memory Lane' in July, 'A Garden Party' by kind invitation of a member in August and a Christmas Party at Custerson Court in December with entertainment by our Chaplain and our MU choir.

The Mothers Union AGM takes place in February.

In addition

. The Mothers s Union held a cake stall at the Christmas Fair to raise funds for St Mary's Church. A generous donation was sent to Mary Sumner house for the MU Project

'Summer of Hope' to train overseas MU Leaders and our small MU Choir led the singing at the World Day of Prayer service at Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Church.

After 6 years as branch leader, I am no longer able to continue and after much searching, there is no one willing to replace me. At the AGM in February 2023 a proposal was put to the members to run the branch by committee with our Chaplain willing to front our formal meetings. This is on condition that the committee organise a rota of essential tasks, with the help of members, in order for the meetings to take place. This will be a trial for 1 year.

The proposal was put to the vote of members present and was carried unanimously.

Brenda Sheath, Branch Leader to February 2023

Men's Activities

Oasis - Men's Lunchtime Get-togethers

Formerly known as M5 and held at the Kings Arms since March 2014, meetings were suspended in March 2020 due to the Covid epidemic.

During the autumn of 2021 interest was expressed in resuming the event, but at a venue that was more accessible for those with impaired mobility and the Old English Gentleman was trialed on Wednesday 6th October under the new name Oasis.

We have continued at the Old English Gentleman on the first Wednesday of each month since that date but sadly, something of the spontaneity has been lost by the need to advise in advance of the number planning to attend on each occasion.

Nevertheless, numbers have generally held up with attendances of between 4 and 10, more usually between 6 and 8 (compare with a usual 12 to 14, exceptionally 20, in M5 days)

The purpose of the event remains the same - to provide an opportunity for male social contact and support, especially for those who may live alone or be experiencing difficult circumstances.

Although principally advertised through monthly reminders in Grapevine, all are welcome and those who attend are free to bring along friends and neighbours, subject of course to prior notification, as above.

The one golden rule is that everyone should pay for his own food and drink, food being available from the day to day bar menu.

Bill Rose

Men's Walks

There was only one walk this year, in May, when Bill Rose and Anthony Armon-Jones were the only walkers. Anthony has stepped back from leading the walks due to ill health, and a new leader was found. If you would like to lead this group, contact Bill Rose

Anna Martin

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee monitors the income, expenditure and financial assets of St Mary's and met on three

occasions in 2022. Membership of the Committee comprised Richard Garvey (Chairman), David Birchall (Treasurer), Tim Game, Steve Hasler, Robin O'Neill, Simon Potter and Denis Tindley.

The routine business of the Committee is unchanged:

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

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

2022 saw a return to more normal activities in the church, although the overhang from the Covid-19 pandemic meant that financial challenges remain. Congregations are still smaller than those pre-pandemic and as a result, the weekly giving by members of the congregation has not returned to previous levels. The 'CollectIn' provided for contactless giving when we weren't taking an Offertory collection and remains a helpful donation mechanism for the congregation as well as visitors to the church. We are fortunate to benefit from very generous donations and legacies and from increases by some of the congregation to their committed Stewardship giving. Nevertheless the reduction in the numbers of regular members of the congregation in the last few years has weighed on the congregation's support to church funding. The return of the Christmas Fair, however, made a very welcome contribution of nearly £4,700 and the additional numbers of weddings and letting out of the church to third parties added nearly £13,000 more.

Current expenditure in 2022 was close to Budget at £257,000 and as a result the overall deficit for the year came out at £16,000. This is the third year in the red after a long run of surpluses. We have the reserves to cope, and will benefit in 2023

from an extremely generous legacy from the estate of the late Lawrence Gooderham which will put us back in the black. We cannot rely on such generosity in the future and every effort should be made to bring our income back to a level where we can sustain the work of the church and our outreach to the communities we serve. To this end the Finance Committee has recommended, and the PCC has agreed, that a separate Fundraising team should be set up.

Richard Garvey

Property Management Committee

The Committee looks after the Churchyard (upkeep is the responsibility of Saffron Walden Town Council), Parish Rooms, Verger's Cottage and the Curate's house. Meetings are held in February, May and September annually.

The Committee was particularly saddened by the death of Lawrence Gooderham. Lawrence had been an active member of St Mary's for 50 years, and his experience, knowledge and wisdom contributed much to our discussions and decisions.

The replacement of the Chancel Roof was completed in late February 2022. The total cost was just under £140,000 plus VAT. We are much indebted to Steve Hasler for his oversight of the project. The new lead roof should have a life of 100 years.

Our church architect carried out the Quinquennial inspection of the Church in September 2022. The major area of concern was identified as the South aisle copper roof which is beginning to deteriorate and may require replacement in the next 5 or so years. Other work proposed by our architect will be reviewed by the Committee during 2023 and implementation plans agreed.

A Statement of Needs for the replacement and enhancement of the church's lighting was approved by PCC in November and the project team is now working on selecting design consultants. Other major projects are the Organ (Statement of Needs agreed by PCC in March 2023), a Nave Altar, and the Audley Tomb, which awaits a resource to lead the project.

Curate's house: replacement of carpets and considerable work to get the garden in order was carried out prior to Ella and Toby moving in.

Work has begun on developing the Energy Footprint Tool as a first stage in the C of E route map to net zero carbon.

All the routine maintenance on the Church and Parish Rooms was completed to schedule, but the inclement weather conditions over the past year have required more work on gutter clearance and drain unblocking. We are very grateful to Tim Game for leading the gutter cleaning team.

Unfortunately we have been unable to recruit a volunteer Fabric Officer: a building the size of St Mary's really needs this regular support. We are most grateful to John Mumford for his care of the Parish Rooms.

I am grateful for the support and guidance of the Committee's members: Mike Felgate, Richard Freeman, Edward Gildea, Steve Hasler (secretary) and Robin O'Neill.

Denis Tindley Chair, Property Committee

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

2022/23 saw the sudden sad loss of our chairman, after over 40 years involvement with The Friends. Many of you will have known Lawrence Gooderham at some point over those years and will have been sharing in our loss.

We were lucky enough to have Denis Tindley on the Friends Council who has taken over the Chairman role for which we are truly grateful. We have also welcomed Chris Knight as a new Council member knowing that he will fit well into the team.

We managed three Cathedral trips last year, Ely in the spring, Bury St Edmunds in the summer followed by Lincoln Cathedral on 9th September, the day after our Queen died. This meant Lincoln was a very moving visit as you can imagine. We also visited Lincoln Castle in the afternoon and enjoyed the amazing views. This year we will be visiting Southwark and Norwich Cathedrals.

The new Baptism Noticeboard was well used during 2022 and I am sure you will have noticed that from this Mothering Sunday the "hands" changed to "feet" as the new baptisms were added.

We were bequeathed two prints from the family of the late Rev'd Sinker which we have had framed and they hang in the back meeting room of the Parish Rooms for everyone to enjoy.

The Sewing Ladies continue their wonderful work with the Kneelers and these will be dedicated at the Patronal Service in September. The Friends Council members continue their work in

trying to keep down the moth population in the Church from invading all the fabrics of the Church, in particular the kneelers and carpets.

We are hoping to plan a summer event which is in the very early stages at present.

Friends membership is again on the rise which is encouraging and we hope to recruit more new members in the coming year.

We look forward to a busy year ahead

Pamela Mugliston

Transition Project

This has been a rather unusual year for the Transition Project, with a uniquely high number of local job vacancies and very few people actively looking for work. However there were a number of people who needed our support.

During 2022 we were able to offer support for CV creation, job search and Interview Practice to 31 clients, 50 in 2022. This is considerably less than in previous years and we have been supporting them with remote working, phone, Zoom etc.

This method of supporting clients is challenging and probably less effective than face-face working but we felt unable to justify asking a minimum of three advisers to give up a morning every week.

You may have noticed that the number of vacancies advertised in the local newspapers has dramatically reduced in recent months. This is apparently due to employers finding the low response (often zero) made costly newspaper advertising impossible to justify.

The local low unemployed figure is likely to continue with Stansted airport requiring a further 1000 staff before the summer.

As a result of this situation we discontinued our traditional weekly advertising in the Walden Local, and now rely on notices around the area and word of mouth together with our web site and Facebook presence. The majority of our clients come to us from two organisations. The Uttlesford Citizens Advice group and more recently "Support Time and Recovery (STaR) workers". Both groups refer clients to us via a central clearing organisation, "Uttlesford Frontline".

The Transition Project received a "Ward Members Initiative Grant" of £250 from Councillor Heather Asker towards the work of the Project in March. This grant, together with the residue of a grant from the Education Trust, and other private donations. This income

coupled with cancelling advertising in October has enabled us to minimise the costs for the PCC in 2022.

Gerald Gardner

Archive Group

The Archive Group has not met since Covid, but as Archivist I am always ready to receive any documents you feel should be carefully documented and stored in the church.

Canon Chris Bishop, On behalf of the Archive Group

ECO Team

The Eco Church team have been active all year and we are now on the cusp of our silver award. Edward has also been linking up with neighbouring churches to share ideas and provide mutual support.

The team

We were delighted to welcome Alison Trew and John Forster onto the team last year, which now also comprises Jackie Damary Holman, Chris Knight, Edward Gildea and Shawn Martin. We meet roughly every 6 weeks. However more members are really needed if we are to make Eco church more than a sideline and to reach the gold award.

Buildings (including Procurement)

Points so far: 243/490 Bronze

Lighting

The premises committee are currently engaged in plans to switch to low energy LED lighting, which will significantly reduce our carbon footprint.

Carbon Footprint

Chris Knight has completed the measurement of our carbon footprint. This is something the Church of England is requiring of every parish in order to track progress towards the Church's target of carbon zero by 2030. This first measurement gives us a baseline from which we can measure St Mary's progress.

Procurement

In Autumn the PCC adopted these guidelines concerning St Mary's procurement:

"In our decisions about purchasing products for St Mary's Church, we will aim where possible to be both ethically and environmentally sustainable. In considering cost, we will assess

the long-term costs, both to ourselves and to others, of our decisions, ensuring that we don't pass on a significant burden to others and minimise any damaging consequences to God's creation."

Churchyard

Points so far: 90/155 Silver

Biodiversity seems to be increasing in the churchyard and in fact one dog walker reports a significant increase in birdsong, which hopefully is due to a rise in insects enjoying the pollen of our wildflowers.

We have tried to create two banks of primroses to welcome congregations on Mothering Sunday and Easter particularly, but these are on south facing banks so had limited success.

Community and Global Engagement Points so far: 144/216 Silver

An article about the environment has appeared in every edition of the Parish News for the last 3 years and has been added to the Eco pages of the website. Our thanks to the Andy Colebrooke and Martin Huggall for publishing these so efficiently.

Fairtrade

Alison teamed up with Hazel Colebrook to run a monthly Fairtrade stall after Sunday communion.

This is not only about trading fairly with distant communities, it also reminds us of our connectedness with people around the world, and the need for greater justice in our global dealings. Their sales totaled £1,525 which supported a wide variety of causes in developing countries, but sadly Fairtrade have recently gone into receivership and so will be unable to supply us with produce.

Worship Points so far: 100/100 Gold

Concern for the environment has continued to be reflected regularly in our worship, prayers and sermons.

Lifestyle Points so far: 86/160 Silver

The greatest and most important challenge of Eco Church is to change the lifestyles of everyone in the parish. Until all our lifestyles have become more sustainable and we are all living more lightly on the planet, the problems of the climate and environmental crises will only become more acute.

Alison Trew has produced an excellent on-line questionnaire which is now live and will provide us with a baseline from which to measure our progress in future years.

Edward Gildea - Eco church team leader

Links with the Worldwide Church:

Lynn Treneary, our CMS Mission Partner in Maridi, South Sudan

It has been a hard time for Lynn mainly for 2 reasons .Both she and her mother were going through serious health issues early in 2022, which meant that Lynn not only had to come back from Maridi but she felt she needed to resign from C.M.S. Thankfully Lynn recovered after a substantial time in hospital but sadly her mother died, leaving her coping with her own recovery, her grief for her mother as well as looking after her step-Father.

Our first communication with C.M.S was to learn of Lynn's resignation which did come as a shock and surprise as she was so committed to those in Maridi Diocese and of course was ordain over there. Lynn had to have a long spell in hospital and I am pleased to say she is now out and recovering both from the sad loss of her mother as well as with her physical. Health and of course the loss of her beloved work with the Maridi Diocese

The news of Lynn's resignation came at the same time as Eleanor Game starting her placement for a year with C.M.J (Church Mission to the Jews) based in Jerusalem. The P.C.C decided that instead of supporting another Link C.M.S. partner they would like to give support to Eleanor; not least because she is part of St Mary's church family.

As it happened C.M.S prayer link group heard about the Lynn's resignation the day after we had just met together and prayed for Lynn. So instead of planning for a time she would come to share her Maridi news and experiences with us we had to plan for her farewell. This too, sadly, had to be stopped due to Lynn's circumstances.

Amazingly earlier this year Lynn wrote to say she was hoping to go back to Maridi after all. As we are now committed to supporting Eleanor, I had to tell her that we sadly would not be able to support her financially but that some of us would continue to pray for her in her return back to Maridi. I have heard nothing very much since so at the time of writing I am not sure where Lynn is but I know she would and will value your prayers for her.

Bible Translation in Romania

David and Sari Gardner serve in Romania, as part of the Consultant Services Group of SIL Eurasia Area, supporting Wycliffe's vision through training Bible translators, helping them prepare an accurate, clear, natural and acceptable translation, giving advice on mother tongue literacy and through computer support work, including helping develop a Bible typesetting program.

Their work involves supporting and training a team that is translating the Bible into Standardised Romani. This Standardised Romani is the standard common teaching language for the Roma in Romania. The published scriptures will become particularly important for Roma schools because very few books for children or adults are available in this language.

In addition to this work, Sari has commenced training to become a recognised translation consultant for SIL. Translation consultants working together with local speakers, check the translations prepared by teams around the world for accuracy, consistency and comprehension. This training, probably including gaining an MA, is expected to take several years.

David's work on the program for computer typesetting of Scripture (PTXprint) is continuing and the program is becoming increasingly used around the world, promoted to local teams by Wycliffe, SIL, the United Bible Societies, and other Bible translation organisations. The program enables translators, frequently working with unusual type fonts to create a meaningful layout quickly. This approach dramatically reduces the time and cost of progressing from text to publication whilst helping to ensure maximum readability and acceptability for end-users. One experienced typesetter at the recent PTXprint workshop had been struggling to produce high quality output in a complex script using the commercial tools he was familiar with (which don't support that script well). On the first day of the workshop he reported that after a quarter of an hour using PTXprint he was getting better results on that project than he had in the previous 9 months. By the end of the workshop he had typeset the New Testament and stated that he expected that, subject to final approvals, it would be going to the printers soon.

David and Sari's children Mark, Aniko Emma and Erik are still largely based at home. Mark is repeating his final university year after finding the imposed remote working during the Covid

restrictions particularly challenging. Aniko is currently working from home after spending a year in France as a volunteer at a care home. She is planning to get married later this year. Emma continues to do well at school and is working towards her Baccalaureate in 2024. Erik continues to do well in his school and has taken part in various local maths competitions.

The continuing financial support from churches and individuals has enabled them to remain with their work in Romania and is greatly valued. As elsewhere, costs are rising and inflation in Romania is high, which makes their financial management particularly important.

Gerald Gardner

Vision Statement

Our Mission

Sharing God's love

Our Vision

Our aim as a church is to:

worship God with joy and reverence

tell of God's love in Jesus Christ

learn about and live our Christian faith

pray and learn about prayer

serve God's world through prayer and action

offer Christ's ministry of wholeness and healing

encourage all to discover and use their gifts for God

engage with and nurture children and young people

welcome everyone warmly and offer generous hospitality

value and care for each other

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

buildings and money - wisely in God's service.