



St Mary's Church
At the heart of the community

**The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin
Wendover
Buckinghamshire**

**Annual Report
May 2022 to April 2023**

Vicar: Rev Sally Moring

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22 Market Square
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Kings Hill
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**Independent Examiner: Gavin Styles FCCA, Chapel Lane, High Wycombe,
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**The church of St Mary the Virgin is situated on the outskirts of Wendover.
It is part of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England.
The correspondence address is
Parish Office, 11 High Street, Wendover, Buckinghamshire, HP22 6DU.**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) became a registered charity in August 2009. Its registration number is 1131299.

PCC members who have served from 27th June 2022 to the date of approval of this report are:

Incumbent: Rev Sally Moring
Associate Priest: Rev Nadine Rose
Curate: Rev Sally Prendergast (left in July)
Rev Matthew Routledge(joined in July)

LLMs: David Blackmore
Ian Sansbury

Churchwardens: Peter Dean

Deanery Synod Representatives:
Sian Chattle
Ian Sansbury
Paul Dean

Elected Members: Paul Dean (Secretary)
Matt Ryan (Treasurer)
Deborah Hale
Tim Crapper
Sarah Frost
Monica Tompsett
Peter Lockett
Jennifer Ballantine
Johanna Free
Nick Wilson (resigned 7th Oct 22)
Catherine Wilson (resigned 7th Oct 22)

Ex Officio Alison Kirk (Diocesan Synod)

A: Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointing PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. New appointees are given an information pack. The PCC has passed a resolution by which a proportion of the PCC members will stand for re-election every three years, limited to a total of six years served. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. This is achieved by notices given out during church services, articles in the St Mary's newsletter and notices placed around the church.

The incumbent is currently Rev Sally Moring with Associate Priest Rev Nadine Rose and Curate Rev Sally Prendergast who left in July to take up her new poste and Revd Matthew Routledge who joined in July. David Blackmore and Ian Sansbury are licensed to serve in the parish as Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM).

The PCC operates by meeting during the year with various sub-committees meeting and conducting delegated activities and taking delegated responsibility in between. Methods of reporting back to the PCC range from the formal pre-distributed reports for discussion at PCC meetings, to informal verbal reports. The PCC became a registered charity in 2009 and is mindful of its responsibilities as Trustees. The major risks to which the church is exposed, as identified by the Trustees have been reviewed annually, and systems or procedures have been established to manage those risks.

B: Objectives and Activities

St Mary's PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the church building, St Mary's Centre, and the churchyard at Church Lane. Since 1992, the PCC has been a party to the Sharing Agreement of 1986 relating to St Anne's Church, Aylesbury Road, Wendover. The PCC also holds a lease over the premises at 11 High Street, Wendover (JUST shop and Parish Office). All of which contribute to our aim to be a church at the heart of the community. Details of our work are described more fully in the following reports from committees and other groups who contribute to our church community. The PCC depends on many volunteers who give freely of their time and talents.

A major part of its activity is the training and involvement of an increasing number of volunteers, doing practical projects or duties alongside others who are further involved as a trustee or a committee member. The benefits from volunteers' work, and our thanks to them, cannot be overstated, without them the viability of our church would be seriously affected. Our grant-making policy is twofold; special appeals which may arise, and giving at a budgeted annual level, where finances are available, as managed by the Global Church Committee.

Electoral Roll

Our Electoral Roll is managed by Jacquie Smith, our Electoral Roll officer. As required, the draft new register has been displayed in church for two weeks prior to the APCM. The number of people on the new Roll was reported at the APCM on 8th May 2022 which was 246 down by 4 from 2021.

The PCC

The full PCC met seven times during the past year using the online Zoom facility or in person at St Mary's. Committees met between meetings and a number reported formally to the PCC.

Church Attendance

We are required by the Diocese to report on the average weekly attendance for the first four weeks of October. This figure is one of the inputs to our Parish Share allocation. For 2021 the average weekly attendance for in person services was 117 and for online services at home services was 45. This period includes the October half term holidays so cannot be taken as a true reflection of 'average' church attendance. Also, being online it does include some households where more than one individual dialled in.

We also had the following numbers for occasional services held at St Mary's: 15 baptisms, 10 weddings and 6 funerals.

Committees

The PCC operates through a number of committees that meet between full meetings of the PCC:

Standing Committee (Chair: Sally Moring) *is responsible for transacting the business of the PCC between meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC.* The committee met seven times between the Annual Meeting of 2022 and 2023 and has reported formally to each PCC meeting.

In addition to the Standing Committee we also have the following committees, Finance and Governance, Estates Committee and People Committee that meet regularly during the year and report back to the PCC.

C: PCC Review of the Year

The year started with our first meeting after the APCM on 25th May 2022.

Catherine Taylor was welcomed to the meeting having been voted on to the PCC at the APCM. The officers were then appointed for the year being Matt Ryan as Treasurer, Paul Dean as Secretary and Jaquie Smith as Electoral Roll officer. Peter Dean was appointed as Vice chair. Matt then advised the meeting of the church's current financial situation. The terms of reference for the new working groups were discussed and passed by the meeting and Sian Chattle was appointed to the Standing Committee. Under the vicars update we discussed the return of the Common cup at communion services following the Covid restrictions. A formal request from the bellringers was received to make sure they are consulted about the tower when HS2 works are started.

The next PCC meeting was on 13th July 2022 where Matt gave his regular financial update. We then discussed safeguarding and a policy document which was passed by the meeting. We learnt about the parish dashboard for safeguarding. Peter Dean then gave us an update on the working group sub committees. Such items as an audio visual upgrade in church, LED lighting, ECO Church, HS2 work, motorised doors, churchyard wall are all under discussion. We had an update on the Sparklers group. With the current cost of living crisis foodbanks are becoming more important and that the church continues to support them.

Our third meeting of the year was on 14th September 2022 and we had a special prayer to start the meeting following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and for our new King Charles III. Sub group reports and a safeguarding report were sent in advance to PCC members. Formal approval has been given for the licensing of our Associate Priest Revd Nadine Rose for another 3 years. Energy costs within the church were discussed and that we are looking for a new contract. Alison Kirk gave us an update from the Diocesan Synod with such things as Net Zero energy work in vicarages, LGBTQ issues and Alison has attended a Living in Love and Faith course. Sally said that a lot of people had visited church following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and had signed a book of condolence,

a National Commemoration service will be held at St Mary's. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a Ukrainian support group has been set up for those people who have fled their country.

Our fourth meeting was held on 23rd November 2022 under safeguarding Sally said we are looking for a new DBS verifier and that a link for safeguarding training is being looked at. Matt gave us a finance update and the new Parish share amount as sent by the Deanery was discussed and the meeting proposed and passed the figure of £110,000. Global Church giving was discussed and the meeting agreed to a figure of 2% of our income for 2023. The meeting also agreed to Christmas giving to go to Chiltern Foodbank and Aylesbury Fuel bank. PCC approval was given to the church wall repair so that a faculty could be applied for. Ian Sansbury has been involved in setting up of the Wendover Warm Welcome initiative. Minutes from church's subgroups was circulated to PCC members. Hire charges of St Mary's was discussed and new rates were approved by the meeting. A vote of thanks was given to David Blackmore for the recent Art Exhibition and to Revd Nadine Rose for the recent Light Party.

Our fifth meeting was on 23rd January 2023 where we started with a question from Sally as to "Where do we see God at work in our community" this was discussed in pairs with a number of shared outcomes. Under safeguarding Sally mentioned there is now a Church of England safeguarding portal we can access with Basic Awareness training. Matt then gave a finance update and how we have raised money for the expected expenditure. E-mails have been sent to PCC members since the last meeting to get approval of expenditure for the church wall work and for the cost of the new motorised doors. Since the recent 10.00 joint services the service patterns were discussed. Revd Nadine Rose gave the meeting an update on families and children work. Sally informed the meeting that we will soon be due a quinquennial inspection. During Lent Churches Together will be using the Diocese Come and See material at weekly meetings. Peter Dean and David Blackmore gave updates on their relevant subgroups.

The sixth PCC meeting of the year was on 21st March 2023 where we discussed the quinquennial report that will soon be required. We had reports from the working groups and a Risk Appetite Framework was discussed and we had a regular finance update from the treasurer.

The last meeting of the year was on Wednesday 26th April 2023 via Zoom which was to approve the accounts for last year, approve the annual report and one

finance item on the new church doors.

I would once again like to offer my thanks to all members of the PCC for their invaluable input during the year and thanks to Sally, Nadine, and our Churchwarden Pete who has had an extra workload being the only churchwarden for the year.

Report by Paul Dean PCC Secretary

D: Financial Statement of the PCC

Treasurer's Report on the accounts for the year to 31 December 2022

Fund details for the financial year to 31 December 2022 are summarised in the table. Please note that fixed assets and depreciation have been excluded from the figures as they relate to past expenditure and not cash spent in 2022.

The General Fund below reflects the income and expenditure arising from the day-to-day activities of our Church. Other Funds for the Church have special rules applied to them and these restrict how the funds can be spent. During 2022 the Church accounts showed a decrease in total funds by £14,517, which is outlined below.

Funds	Income	Expenses	Transfer/(Losses)	Surplus/ (deficit)	Funds at 31.12.22
General	£171,936	£164,206	(£27,349)	(£19,709)	£35,632
Designated (All)	£215	£32,957	£27,439	(£5,303)	£68,383
Fabric (Restricted)	£12,000	£-	£-	£12,000	£29,423

Legacy (Restricted)	£-	£-	£-	£-	£23,207
Other Restricted	£8,793	£8,021	(£2,277)	(£1,505)	£27,369
Total	£192,944	£205,184	(£2,277)	(£14,517)	£184,014

General Fund

2022 saw a steady pattern for our finances at St Mary's. Planned giving, via the Parish Giving Scheme and regular standing orders was consistent with 2021 while other giving dropped slightly. The weekly collections increased as regular worship returned. So too, did our income from hiring the church and centre, however church fees, for weddings etc, were lower than 2021. During the lockdown we received extra one-off donations, however these were less common in 2022. Total income in 2021 was much higher due to the church receiving several larger gifts from legacies, where we received £42,000, however, 2022 only saw £1,000 from legacies. The JUST shop, once again made an enormous difference to our income as it donated over £15,500 from profits and contributed £9,187 towards running costs.

Our general fund costs increased slightly in the year with costs rising from £160,831 to £164,206. The largest general fund costs for the church in the year were Parish Share of £111,644, which was paid in full and meant that we were able to support the ministry of other churches in the Oxford Diocese. Running the shop cost £13,702 and our utilities increased significantly due to the energy price rises. Due to timings of our gas and electricity contracts expiring, we have ended up renewing at a very expensive time in the autumn, just as all the external economic factors were hitting hard. This continues to prove a real challenge for the church and will form much discussion for the PCC and wider church in 2023.

Despite this we ended the year with the General Fund making a surplus of £7,730. In the year the PCC made a decision to transfer a percentage of its general income to a Global Church fund which will look at giving to local, national and international organisations – this fund received a transfer from

the General Fund of £3,439 leaving a balance at the year end of £4,061. In addition to this, the General Fund also transferred £24,000 to the Ministry Development Fund to provide enough resource for the Assoc Priest position for 2023.

Other Funds

In the year the Ministry Development Fund, which had been setup to support the plans shown in the Mission Action Plan, spent £30,046. The church had previously made a commitment until the end of 2023 regarding payments for our Associate Priest, and this was renewed for a further three years in the year. It was agreed by the PCC, that legacies received by the PCC would be designated to be used towards Ministry Development, unless restrictions were given by the donor. At the year end the Ministry Development Fund had £48,000 after transfers from the General Fund and Legacies Fund to carry forward to pay for two of the three years' salary costs.

Significant grants were received in the year towards the works on the new doors to be fitted in 2023, with £12,000 being received from three sources. This £12,000 was included in the restricted Fabric Fund and can only be spent on the doors.

Due to limited spending on the building over the last three years since COVID, we have spent little on major works on the building. As such, 2023 will see the need for significant expenditure, with work on the doors, churchyard walls, AV and sound as well as huge increases in our utility costs outlined above.

It should be noted that none of the other restricted funds can be used against St Mary's running costs but restricted to fabric, the churchyard, bells, flowers amongst other things.

Thank you

I would like to say a big thank you to all of you who have continued to support the church over the last 12 months. We are fortunate to have a faithful and generous congregation who support our work in Wendover.

Grants from outside sources have been received with gratitude, notably Heart of Bucks, The Lionel Abel-Smith Trust and the Wendover Parish Council. Thank

you to the donors, but also those who worked hard on researching and requesting fundraising.

Not only have we benefited from income but thank you to those of you who have helped us to keep our costs down, whether that be volunteering with posts or actively trying to save money on our running costs.

Once again, we are hugely grateful to Helen Blakeman and her team at Just who have run the shop and have once again done a fantastic job in the year.

I would also like to give special thanks to all those who have supported me as treasurer during this year. I mention Sarah Bishop who has continued to help with some of the finance tasks! There are many others who work behind the scenes, so thank you for all you do.

Report by Matt Ryan, PCC Treasurer

E: Churchwardens' Report, including the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

As I reach the end of my first year as Churchwarden I am reflecting on just how much I have learnt about the breadth and depth of our activities. St Mary's is a rich and diverse community that serves Wendover in so many ways. As churchwarden, it has been a privilege to see so many people contributing, seen and unseen, to the life of the church. I am hugely grateful to Jacquie Smith for her guidance and support in the transition. Jacquie's time as Churchwarden was dominated by the pandemic so all the work she did, with others, to maintain our activities during lockdown and to revitalise the life of the church as we emerged from a very difficult time has made my introduction to the role much more straightforward than it could have been. By the time I was commissioned last year we were beginning to establish the 'new normal'. The regular pattern of Sunday services has been confirmed alongside very successful and well-attended weekday activities including Sparklers and the Thursday Communion Service.

Taking the opportunity provided by a fresh start following the pandemic, we have been thinking about making our activities sustainable into the future, using our time, energy and resources efficiently. This has led to discussions across the Ministry Team and PCC and has resulted in a review of the operation of the PCC to ensure that we are fulfilling our governance role, making good use of the skills and experience of PCC members. This has increased the opportunities for PCC members to directly contribute to the running of the church whilst not overburdening individuals. The aim is to support the Ministry Team as we work towards our Mission Action Plan.

The most notable change to the way PCC works has been the introduction of three committees to provide a detailed but collective consideration of key aspects of PCC accountabilities: Finance and Governance, People, and Estates. Each of these is chaired by a member of PCC (Sarah Frost, myself and David Blackmore respectively), has additional representation from the PCC and can draw on further expertise from across the church as necessary. Standing Committee continues to meet between PCC meetings to support the Vicar and help the PCC set its agenda.

This has been a significant change but has helped to empower PCC members in decision making and to ensure we keep track of important developments. The arrangements are still bedding in, and we will keep them under review but the first year of operation has been very encouraging.

The Estates Committee has been overseeing several important projects related to the fabric of the church building. The most notable enhancement to the exterior has been the repair to the flint-faced wall on the approach to the carpark. Locating and appointing a suitable contractor was difficult and time-consuming but the result is excellent. There are a few remaining areas of the churchyard retaining wall that need attention and so we will be tackling these next.

One of the most notable internal improvements has been the replacement of the projector. This is part of a more extensive project to upgrade the AV capabilities that are now an integral part of many of our activities and an important community resource.

There are also future planned improvements with substantial work commissioned to motorise the glass entrance doors. This will improve accessibility. We will also use this opportunity to repair the faulty door leading into the St Mary's Centre.

At the time of writing, we are awaiting the architect's report following the recent quinquennial inspection. This inspection is a legal requirement and will provide us with a professional external view of the condition of the building with recommendations that will inform our plans for estate work over the next five years. This plan will also need to take account of any HS2 mitigation work.

As we make plans for the medium term, we recognise that our most serious challenge is the cost of energy. Although short-term government help and energy saving measures on our part helped us through last winter we cannot assume that this will be possible next winter. Our Bronze Eco-Church award shows that we have made good progress but with energy prices likely to remain very high for the foreseeable future the PCC will need to address the issue. This will necessitate the prioritisation of our resources whilst exploring all possible opportunities for reducing energy consumption and attracting additional external funding. Significant long-term energy savings are probably only possible through substantial up-front capital expenditure.

The Finance and Governance Committee have been supporting the excellent work of Matt Ryan as Treasurer. The committee has been able to provide detailed monitoring of our finances against the agreed budget and so enables the PCC to discharge its responsibilities in this area. Led by Sarah Frost, the committee has been reviewing our governance processes and has begun the development of a risk management approach that will provide the PCC with a framework for thinking about our activities, any risks associated with them and any appropriate mitigation to reduce those risks.

The People Committee looks in detail at the PCC's accountabilities around our employees and the support we provide to the many volunteers on which our community is so dependent. After following the necessary finance and HR processes, the PCC was delighted to renew the Associate Priest contract for Rev Nadine Rose. Nadine's post is funded by St Mary's but, as an ordained priest, Nadine is formally employed under the arrangements for clergy rather

than being directly employed by the PCC. Nadine's contribution to our work with families and young people has been hugely important to us together with her wider support for Sally and the whole ministry team.

Becky Murgatroyd-Morton has moved on to new opportunities from her post as Youth Minister although Becky and Claire are still very much part of our church community. We wish Becky well in whatever she does in the future. Julie Hadley is now very much the face of St Mary's in the parish office, providing that all-important welcoming first point of contact to so many in Wendover.

Sally, Nadine, Matthew, Michelle, David and Ian work incredibly hard to support and develop St Mary's as a church at the heart of the community but we can only offer such a wide range of activities through the continued input from so many volunteers. It was only when I took on the churchwarden role that I began to appreciate the true scale and commitment of our volunteers. There are so many things that 'just happen' because someone has committed to quietly and reliably making it so. It's probably not even possible to list all the contributions but I would like to record my personal thanks to all those who have given their time and skills to make St Mary's such a vibrant part of Wendover life. As individuals we are on our own unique spiritual journey but as a community of Christians together, we can make a real difference in the world. To Wendover and beyond...

Report by Peter Dean, Churchwarden

F: Deanery Synod Report

There is nothing to report under this section.

G: Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Church of England and the Diocese require each church to have in place policies on Safeguarding, to support our '*working with children and young people*', to consider in our own context all aspects of the '*Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults in the Diocese of Oxford*' policy - to ensure procedures

are in place to ensure a safe environment for children and young people, and Vulnerable Adults - in all aspects of St Mary's work. Within the policies and guidance, it considers all aspects of current disclosure procedures under the "Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure safe recruitment of volunteers and employees".

Our church follows the guidance and good practice on Safeguarding issued by Oxford Diocese. Our Safeguarding Policy, for Children & Vulnerable Adults, was reviewed by the PCC in 2022. This policy can be found in the church porch and centre. We make an annual return to the Oxford Diocese to confirm that we are following guidelines and that we have noted changes in requirements. Making this return has become more streamlined through the Safeguarding Dashboard for Parishes, and the questions asked help us to know that our policies and procedures are in line with requirements, or that some aspect requires renewal, or needs to be developed. The Dashboard reflects the requirements of the national Safeguarding Handbook 2018 (revised 2019).

The ministry team, led by the Vicar, receive specific Safeguarding training and guidance from the Diocese. The PCC considered St Mary's approach to Safeguarding in the context of current Diocesan Guidance and model Policies, particularly taking account of the role of volunteers and the changing and developing nature of activities in the church. At St Mary's we have different teams of volunteers helping to lead the various activities for both children, young people and vulnerable adults. All volunteers and paid workers have to undertake periodic training in safeguarding awareness under the auspices of the Diocese. Much work has been done by the expanded Diocesan Safeguarding Team. What has been particularly helpful is the addition of Tsungai Muchegwa as the specific Safeguarding Adviser for Buckinghamshire parishes. She conducts periodic and helpful web-based meetings for Parish Safeguarding Officers and distributes her own bulletins to support the work of PSOs. Her contact details are on the Diocesan website.

The Diocese in conjunction with the House of Bishops is regularising levels of training necessary for different roles, and the frequency of such. Modes of training have been refined with much now on-line, reflecting to needs of the Covid pandemic period and/the difficulty individuals face in being available to attend face-to-face training/ and the need for uniform delivery of training modules. Most on-line training modules last between 60, 90, or 120 minutes, and the PCC will now consider how to support individuals needing to complete training modules, but for whom doing so online is not possible from home.

Although past face-to-face local training was welcomed, the significant advantage of online training is that materials are continually updated, including scenarios that reflect current issues. Each module comes with helpful guidance on how to navigate through the course on a computer or tablet, and it is set up to enable users to pause in a module, or to see the spoken commentary as printed text (Volunteers, whether working with children or vulnerable adults, requiring initial or updated training, have already been able to use online resources from the Diocese)

Safeguarding and Communication issues in the context of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) remain an important consideration, notably in the maintenance and storage of any written records relating to training or other Safeguarding matters.

What is most important is that all volunteers are aware of 'Best Practice'. St Mary's has adopted two Good Practice Guides – one for children and one for vulnerable adults. These guides include a Code of Conduct and other relevant support materials. These documents have been distributed to volunteers working in the church community in different contexts. They will be reviewed shortly in the context of current guidance and will be re-distributed if necessary. Bellringers received the specific guidance document from the Diocese which has previously formed the basis of a specific briefing and the Bellringing team is currently looking at its training needs.

Volunteers at St Mary's are DBS checked as required by the Diocese, through APCS, the Diocesan preferred Verification organisation. As the APCS procedures enable automatic renewal communication with individuals (if they sign up to this), the work of the Verifying Officer, is to some extent helped - with the particular focus of that role being the identification and submission of applications for new volunteers, new members of the PCC and Volunteers who have not signed up to the automated renewal system with APCS.

Rachel Claringbold relinquished her role as Verifier late last year. A new Verifier has been identified, but it may now be necessary for St Mary's to start DBS training records and Verifying records afresh.

The Verifier keeps a central list of DBS checks and training to inform the officers of the Church and other leaders and volunteers when checks and training need to be updated. There is a five-year renewal policy. On the Diocesan website there is detailed guidance to clarify which volunteers need to be DBS checked,

and at which level. On the Government website linked to DBS is further definition of “Volunteer”.

In the current context of COVID-19, there has been specific guidance on the Diocesan Website in relation to Safeguarding matters, Training and DBS checking. No face-to-face training has been available locally or from the Diocese. Excellent guidance is available on the NSPCC website in relation to “keeping children safe”, and the Diocesan guidance includes helpful protocols for communication with Families, Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults – whether by phone, other electronic means or by distance or face-to-face visiting.

The Diocese has undertaken a comprehensive Safeguarding Review, PCR2 covering the period 1960 to 2010; details of the findings were published on the Diocesan website last October. (Church members will be aware of this review because of a request Sally made last year for information to be shared with her in confidence of any Safeguarding incident in the past that caused concern, in relation to a member of the clergy and/or church officers).

Currently, if anyone has cause for concern about any vulnerable adult or young person and would like to talk in confidence, then please contact Helen Blakeman, the Safeguarding Officer. (h.blakeman3@btinternet.com)

Report by Helen Blakeman, Safeguarding Officer

H: Vicars Report

Through the summer of 2022 Saint Mary's Church continued to recover from the pandemic. We saw more people attending services, those who had felt unable to return gradually doing so and quite a few new faces. At no point have we just sat back and rested on our laurels but instead have continued to seek new ways to develop the discipleship within our church; our relationship with God but also our relationship with each other.

There's been a number of key events during the last 12 months starting with Matthew Routledge's ordination as a Deacon which took place at Christchurch Cathedral Oxford on Saturday July 2nd. It was wonderful that quite a few of us were able to be at that service. The next day we welcomed back Matthew

acknowledging all that he has done for St Mary's in the past alongside Andrea and all that he will do as an ordained minister; we celebrated with a BBQ in the sunshine after the service which was particularly special as those who've known Matthew over the years were able to return and we all enjoyed being together and celebrating. At the end of the summer, we said goodbye and thank you to Sally Prendergast who had been curate for the previous three years. Sally brought a lot of creativity to St Mary's; she is now part of the team at St Dunstan's, Monks Risborough.

On September the 8th 2022 Queen Elizabeth II died after a reign of more than 70 years and so, along with many other churches across our country, we opened our doors, held a space for people to come and be quiet and pray and then held two services giving thanks for the Queen and her long reign. This was very much appreciated by the Wendover community. I'm particularly grateful to the bell ringers who muffled and unmuffled bells on various occasions during the period of mourning. We look forward to marking the coronation of King Charles the 3rd at the beginning of May.

For me Christmas was the time that showed us that we were pretty much back to normal with large numbers attending the different services which included a wonderful Carol service with the group of singers that Edward drew together singing some very beautiful carols and the services at Midnight and on Christmas Day were well attended. It was the 4pm gathering on Christmas Eve that stands out when hundreds of people walked along Heron Path to join us in the grounds of Saint Mary's to simply sing carols, to hear the story and to be able to celebrate - mulled wine, costumes and glow sticks no doubt helped in all of that but it was a real joy to see all different ages gathering together to welcome the birth of Christ once again. We must find ways to do this on other occasions to make our church welcome and accessible to those who may not join us week by a week but are still very much part of our community.

Over a period of time, we've reflected on the different services that we've been able to offer, the styles, the pattern and time. Over the summer as we have in previous years, held joint services when our two congregations came together; there were suggestions that this should be our usual pattern of worship. However, it was recognised that what makes St Mary's the church it is that we have a variety of services, cater for a variety of ages and situations and that

actually combining into one would lose the full flavour of the two different services. It was decided to keep our 9:00 AM and 10:45 AM services as they are and on occasion come together particularly to celebrate and mark significant events.

Two aspects of our church life that continued to flourish are Sparklers and our Thursday morning communion service. Sparklers is our toddlers and babies' group that meets every Monday during term time led by Nadine Rose, our associate priest and supported by a wonderful group of volunteers who are able to greet parents or carers with young children, give them some time to play together, space to be able to have conversations and also wonderful refreshments that are supplied by members of church. Also over the year Nadine has organised one off events such as the Light party, Pancake party, Easter activities and summer activities. It's really important that we create times for families to come together and to develop their faith together in a fun way and being supported by our church. Over the summer it was tremendous that Natalie Armstrong and Nadine were able to create a very accessible play area at the back of church which is used on a Monday, on Sundays during services but is also available for children who drop into church with their families- we find that there are regulars who know that the space is there and that they are welcome to be using it.

Thursday mornings are always a busy time at Saint Mary's at the 10am Holy Communion service often attended by over 20 people who enjoy coming for a quiet service with a short sermon and then tea and coffee and an opportunity to chat together afterwards.

I am always very grateful to all of those who contribute to the life of Saint Mary's; we're very lucky to have the members of our ministry team which is now David Blackmore and Ian Sansbury as LLM's and then Matthew, Nadine and myself as clergy. In March we said goodbye to Becky Murgatroyd Morton in her role as our youth minister; Becky worked with us for nine years and decided that the time had come to pause and look at what her future direction might be. Many young people have been able to develop their faith with Becky and other leaders of Surge leaders alongside her; I'm very grateful for that.

No church can function without volunteers and I am very grateful to all of those who volunteer to create rotas and to be part of rotas so making coffee, flower arranging, reading, interceding, creating music, preparing for services, welcoming people, cleaning, being part of our PCC and so much more a huge thank you from me in for all that you do. There are of course always opportunities for those who aren't already involved to come onboard, and you will be made most welcome and given the training that you may need if it's something that you've not done before.

During the autumn we had a series of sermons about being the Body of Christ looking at ourselves, each other, our relationship with God, our relationship with the world and creation and how we relate to the community in the places where we live and work. It is important that we do act as one body; sometimes we have differing views but being able to come together to worship God, to thank him for all that he does for us and to share his love, hospitality and welcome to any who wish to come and be part of our church community and those who are beyond it is our purpose in being a church.

Sally Moring

April 2023

Annual Report was reviewed and approved by the PCC at their meeting on 26th April 2023