



2020 Annual Reports

to be presented at

THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

To be held on Tuesday 22nd June at 7pm



Worship open to all at home or in Church

Reaching out to those in need

Sharing the love of Christ with all



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Thoughts from the Rector

With this year's introduction, I am minded to have something of a nautical theme as we reflect upon all that happened last year and as we look forward to a season of recovery.

I can remember a number of social commentators last year referring to the global pandemic as bringing a "tsunami of grief" and as a local Church we had to navigate some stormy waters as we listened to God's voice and stepped out in response to those in need locally and further afield.

Providing practical, emotional and spiritual support, I am delighted to say that with God's help we were enabled not to

be overwhelmed by it all but rather to calmly and prayerfully respond and you will read more about this in the various reports given.

It was John A. Shedd who once said, "A ship in harbour is safe – but that is not what ships are built for" and the same is true of Churches. A local Church is healthiest when it is not just thinking about what it is doing within its four walls but when it is providing hope and healing to those in its wider community.

During the various lockdowns over this past year, we have been very mindful of the losses, the loneliness and sense of isolation, and the mental anguish that so many have been experiencing. The pandemic will inevitably leave a legacy of broken lives and deep scars across society that the local Church can help with, as it is empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. In response, we are thankful that we were able to upgrade our AV capabilities and offer both in-person worship and online worship that helps with our spiritual wellbeing and for the many volunteers who helped with the pastoral care outreach that took many forms.

You will see that this year's report takes a different format under the headings of 'Looking Up, Welcoming In, and Reaching Out', which was a phrase that arose out of prayer last autumn. Looking forwards and not backwards, may we remember that we have a God who listens to our prayers and who promises to be with us every step of the way. So we look forward in hope and, as Mark Twain once said:

Sail away from the safe harbour.

Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover.

Every blessing

David



St Mary's PCC is responsible together with our Rector, David Williams, for promoting the whole mission of our churches in the context of our vision "Sharing the Love of Christ with All" and our values of GRACE

PCC MEETING

Growing in God
Relationships matter
All people
Changing lives
Excite



In these challenging times the PCC is committed to our churches reaching as many people as possible in the area and enabling them to be part of the worshipping community of St Mary's and St Peter's, so they can see our church communities as their spiritual home. The live streaming of our services, for which huge thanks to our technical advisory team, who put this in place as well as a team with them, who are streaming the services. We are happily aware of some people who have joined St Mary's in this way.

The PCC report last year included the meetings up to the end of September 2020. Since then we have met six times, however the work involved has not reduced especially as we had to keep on reviewing the opening and closing of the churches during this period in line with the pandemic regulations. We were pleased to be able to open the churches at Christmas and at Easter and again since the 2 May 2021, all under the present rules.

The PCC, which is the governing body in Anglican churches, consists of 20 members at present -- 13 of whom are lay members of the congregation, including 3 who are also Deanery Synod members, plus 2 Churchwardens, the Rector, Associate Minister, Curate, and 2 Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs).

Two very encouraging appointments were made during this period :

A new PCC secretary – Louise Fell, who is doing a great job. We want to thank her for standing and being prepared to continue at the forthcoming APCM, as well as thanking Kathryn Trout, who on top of all her normal work, carried this job during a long period when we had no PCC secretary.

A Parish Safeguarding Officer - Tony Eccleston, who has much experience in this area and has agreed to do this on an interim basis, until we find a permanent replacement. He immediately got to work to ensure that our policies were in line with current Diocesan Regulations and the PCC approved a safeguarding action plan. Tony replaced Jenny King as PSO, as she wished to stand down due to ill health and our prayers continue to be with her. She kindly agreed, on top of her work in the office, to continue to be the Safeguarding Verifier and to provide Tony with administrative support.

During these eight months, amongst all the usual work of the PCC, including the oversight of the services, the care of our congregations, the maintenance of our buildings and the monitoring of our finances, there have been the following highlights: -

- The decision to advertise for a part time children's and families' worker to start in September 2021, for one year and to take a strong lead in helping us shape and develop ministry for children and families. Following this to appoint a fulltime worker in September 2022 for at least two years.
- Seeking to continue and develop further the prayer life of the churches in various ways, including 24 hour prayer days, all of which undergirds what we do and our care for one another.
- Commissioning the new AV system so that live streaming could take place from Christmas 2020 onwards, developing into hybrid services.
- Enabling the operation and outreach of the Food Cupboard in St Mary's Church over the last year.
- Highlighting Climate Change this year and commissioning an Energy Report for the Church and Chapter

House. As a result of this a number of actions have already been taken and others are included on the programme of works for the buildings, including reviewing greener energy contracts at the next renewal. We have received a small grant from the Diocese towards actions made as a result of the report and a grant of £1,000 to develop teaching and expertise for us to become more environmentally aware.

- Making a declaration of Climate and Environmental Emergency Recognition and committing ourselves to a series of actions in response.
- Amongst other discipleship courses run during the period, the current course which is being run from Pentecost for ten weeks – encouraging members to form prayer triplets to support and pray for one another and our churches' mission in this area and beyond.
- Pastoral work, including the weekly pastoral care letter, St Mary's news, Zoom Life Groups to name a few and the work of Operation Sheepfold which seeks to ensure that all those in the congregations are supported in different ways.
- The launch of online giving with a donate button on our web site to enable an additional way of giving in this digital age.

I would like, on behalf of both churches, to give my personal thanks to Roger Arthey my fellow warden, and Peter Knight and Pete Wynn, our assistant wardens, as well as all those who give so much time and commitment to the work of the PCC, including Jimmy Finlay, who is stepping down after his three years service.

If you would like to consider offering to be a lay representative on the PCC please do contact David Stephenson or Roger Arthey and we would be glad to give you more information.



STEWARDSHIP
Managing God's Gifts To Us

Letter to our Church Family

Our treasurer Jane Dyson often reminds us that where God leads, he provides and this is certainly true of the previous year. Thanks to your faithful obedience following God's lead, our predicted shortfall was much less than the budget. Our giving is in response to God's generosity to us, which we understand to be part of our discipleship. We are again calling on your generosity to help with our funding gap this year and hopefully you will all have received a letter outlining our need for additional funding this year.

After a challenging year of Covid hardship for us all, St Mary's continues to provide a key witness to the people of Princes Risborough and the surrounding area, proclaiming the good news of the saving power of Jesus Christ in different ways so that many people hear, see and understand it. This witness requires our continued financial support, and this will come from the generosity of the church family.

This year we need to increase our income by £25,000 in order to continue and develop our ministry and to minimise our potential budget deficit, and we are asking for a response from us all. This is in addition to any special appeals, such as for our Children's and Families' work and the Food Cupboard, which you generously support.

There are a number of ways you can give to the Church. The best way is through our **Regular Giving Scheme**, as this gives us the ability and confidence to plan expenditure. Of course, we always welcome one-off gifts in response to particular gifts from God and we also have an online giving button on our website.

For more information on ways of giving, please contact our Giving Secretary, Michael Hoey, in confidence on plannedgiving@stmarysrisborough.org.uk or telephone 01844 275192. For more general enquiries contact us at parishoffice@stmarysrisborough.org.uk or telephone 01844 273300.

Churchwardens' Fabric and Property Report

Peter Knight

Both St Mary's and St Peter's churches remain in generally good condition. However there have been a significant number of small repairs required through the year, and on the horizon for both churches are larger items of expenditure which will need addressing.

There follows a summary of the work carried out over the last year:

Church Heating: The system has worked well for most of the year, but in mid-March the system broke down, and has taken over six weeks to identify the problem, and repair it.

Leak at West end of North Aisle roof: After heavy rain, significant water weeps down the north aisle north wall flooding the coffee area – fortunately this does not happen very often. A remedial plan of work has been agreed, and a Diocesan Faculty was issued in September. Pete Wynn and Andy Stone commenced work on this in early December, but the arrival of winter weather prevented them from completing the job. It is now planned to finish this in the next few weeks.

Internal Painting of the Church: Significant areas of the walls need repainting, with some areas needing more extensive treatment. This is not intended to be a complete repaint of the whole interior, but only of those areas which most need updating. This work awaits the repair to the west end of the North Aisle roof (see above), so that those walls can dry out before painting. The drying out will take time, so the repainting will not be done until late 2021 at the earliest.

Coffee area roller shutter: In the autumn of 2019 the winding mechanism broke. Contact has been made with the original suppliers, Guardian, and in late April 2021 they came and repaired the shutter, which is now back in normal operation. Thank you to Pete Wynn for organising this.

Electrical Testing: In July both the 5-yearly condition testing and the 3-yearly Portable Electrical Appliance Testing (PAT) were completed. This identified a few issues needing attention. The necessary follow up work was completed in December.

Minor Roof Repairs: These were done in December, covering the main roof to the Nave and Chancel, and some repointing around the flashing on the south aisle roof.

Chapter House Lift: After a routine service in December, repairs were identified. These were completed in January, but also led to modifications being required to the main Chapter House electrical distribution board, and these were done in March.

Church Clock: This continues to work well, thanks to Michael Hoey, who regularly maintains and winds the clock – thank you Michael.

Church Hall: A lot was done in early 2020, taking advantage of the lockdown: The toilet area was re-roofed; several rooms were repainted; and the entrance lobby floor and doors were refurbished. A big thank you to Pete Wynn and Paul Seward, who have organised this and, except for the reroofing, have also done the work.

Chancel East Gable Window – Re-leading: The Quinquennial Inspection (QI) flagged this up as being needed within 5 years, with an estimated cost of ~£32,500. The first step is to obtain a conservator's Report, which is being planned.

Energy Audit: This was carried out in September, using an audit company recommended by the Diocese. This



covered all parts of the Church and Chapter House (but not the Church Hall), and made various recommendations for saving energy and reducing both our costs and carbon footprint. These are being considered on their merits, and a plan for implementation worked out.

Churchyard: Several things have been progressed:

Trees: The two Lime trees fronting onto Church Street, which had been slowly dying, were cut down in June, and their stumps ground out this April. Later this year two replacement Limes will be planted in the same location. Also in June the scheduled work of removing dead wood was done (this applied to about 8 trees); and in October the dead Hawthorn next to the gate from Stratton Rd was cut down.

Fencing: In the churchyard extension, the fencing fronting onto Stratton road has been cleared of ivy and undergrowth, cleaned, and treated with wood preservative. A great job done! Thank you to Stuart Slade-Carter and Michael Hoey for doing this. Local repairs have also been completed on the access gate – thanks to Pete Wynn for this.

Statue in Quiet Garden: In August, as an act of malicious vandalism, the Bronze statue in the quiet garden was knocked from its plinth and the plinth damaged – fortunately the statue was undamaged. This was successfully repaired in January/February.

Damage to Main brick gatepost: In late June/early July the left hand gate post (viewed from Malthouse Square) was knocked sideways displacing the top section. This was repaired in December, along with other minor brickwork repairs to the churchyard walls, and the SW corner of the south Aisle.

Churchyard maintenance: Regular mowing, leaf sweeping and maintenance continued through the year, undertaken by a team of volunteers. A big thank you to all involved.

Work to the Tower: In the 2014 QI improvements were recommended to the internal access to the parapet level of the Tower, as the current provision is substandard. The 2019 QI recommends consideration is given to the replacement of the long wooden ladder with a new metal one. Although this access is not often used, it is intended that access should be improved, but it has not been possible to progress this over the last year.

Work at St Peter's: The QI identified some urgent roof repairs, and these were done in September. As part of this work, a closer inspection of the chancel roof was carried out, which showed that the present roof is in urgent need of re-roofing. Once a budget is agreed for this significant cost, quotes for the re-roofing will be obtained.

In September, the large laurel bushes in the churchyard were cut back. Through the summer the local Ilmer team did essential maintenance around the church, including cutting hedges and regular mowing. Many thanks to this dedicated small team.



Records: The PCC were made aware, at its meeting on 13 May 2021, that the church records as follows were updated and were available for any member to see:

- ◇ The terrier, which is a book listing land belonging to the church,
- ◇ An inventory of all items belonging to the church, and
- ◇ A log book of the alterations, additions and repairs to the church.

For next year's report: Also on the horizon (at the end of 2021) Michael Hoey is taking honourable retirement from the myriad of church maintenance jobs which he has faithfully and unobtrusively carried out over the last 20 years or so. A very big thank you to Michael for having maintained the churchyard and clock in such good order—yours are very large shoes to fill!



PRAYERand..... WORSHIP

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP FOCUS GROUP (TWFG)

Nancy Wallace, Co-Chair

Since the 2020 APCM, we have met 3 times via Zoom, in October 2020, January and April 2021. We have discussed what has gone well or not so well and made some recommendations. The Covid pandemic restrictions have affected all the 'traditional' Sunday and mid-week services in St Mary's and St Peter's. It has been a time of loss, gain and learning.

Losses include:

- ◇ being unable to receive communion or come into a church building for corporate worship for much of the year;
- ◇ suspension of the mid-week service of Holy Communion for much of the year;
- ◇ being unable to participate in corporate singing in church;
- ◇ suspension of the 8.00 am Sunday service since Lent 2020 and continuing;
- ◇ being unable to socialise in church;
- ◇ only a few in-person Sunday services at St Peter's and no opportunity to share these online.

Gains include:

- ◇ live streaming of 9.15 Sunday service is valued and enables a wider group of people to participate, particularly important for those too 'vulnerable' to attend in person;
- ◇ use of greater variety in the liturgy;
- ◇ joy on re-entering the churches for corporate worship, when this has been possible;
- ◇ appreciation of the value of what we had 'lost';
- ◇ 'Prayer during the Day' via Zoom has been helpful.

Learning includes:

- ◇ both in-person and streamed online services will continue to be important;
- ◇ upgrade of aspects of the AV system was needed and is proving beneficial;
- ◇ move from Zoom to YouTube and Facebook live streaming has improved online worship experience;
- ◇ more volunteers are needed to be trained to staff the AV desk for traditional services;
- ◇ It is helpful for anyone taking an 'up front' or technical part in a service to watch it on YouTube later, to learn what could be done better.

Changes to Sunday Worship and moving to a hybrid Church

In our Church Vision document, we mention how we offer a rich variety of services and prayer ministry and over this past year I was delighted at the way in which, thanks to God and a number of our Church members, we were enabled to respond quickly to the pandemic and adapt our ways of providing worship and prayer. Transferring to online worship did mean a financial investment at a difficult time but, as we have experienced in the past, where God leads God provides! It also means that going forwards, as people increasingly return to in-person worship in Church so we will be able to continue to provide online worship for those whom we are now more aware of, who are unable to attend in the Church building for a variety of reasons.



In terms of the services we are offering, we have had to gradually offer more and this rightly is dependent on the number of trained volunteers we have, resources, energy levels, and needing to fulfil Covid health and safety guidelines as given by the National Church and Government. In more recent weeks, I am delighted that we have once again returned to offering services at St Peter's Ilmer as well as in St Mary's, something that has been greatly appreciated by those who live in Longwick and Ilmer, even though these are small in number.

With prayer, it was also good to put on a 24/7 Prayer event which people could attend in Church and online and a special thanks to Pat Kerr for overseeing this and making it happen. Whilst I am thanking Pat on our behalf, can we also thank him for his weekly provision of assemblies and worship/prayer ideas for Longwick primary school (which has included spending hours recording messages to be shown online to the pupils!) and for his leading with Jenni of the Reconnect services, as we complement the other services with these special services that are reaching out to young families and children.



Another development, as we increased the provision of worship and prayer through the year was the midweek Thursday 'Prayers During the Day' which delightfully involved a number of Church members leading them as well as Clergy and let us particularly thank Nancy Wallace for her help with arranging these. As restrictions have lifted, so these have become midweek Holy Communion services but we have kept the Wednesday morning prayers going and this is a much valued gathering that is still

happening via Zoom. It would also be good to mention our Prayer email chain that Peter Cline oversees and if you know of anyone who would appreciate prayer do pass these on to Peter Cline or Kathryn in the Church Office.

'24/7 Prayer' *Pat Kerr*

As we have journeyed through the past year, we have tried to seek new ways of encouraging the church to be a hub of prayer for our community. Launching our Advent season, we began with 24 hours of prayer, in which people could attend the church in person or join in online. As a result, we were able to fill every hour slot, with many people saying they felt blessed by this occasion, by having an opportunity to be contemplative and join in prayer in a difficult season. We are continuing with these 24 hours of prayer events, every quarter as we seek to hear what God is saying to us as a church and individually. Do watch out for the upcoming one before the summer and sign up as many who have participated have really enjoyed this opportunity to be a part of corporate prayer together.

Jo Williams adds: This prayer initiative is one which was founded by Pete Grieg and at St. Mary's we have had a growing sense over the Covid dominated season that prayer has to be at the heart of all that we are, both individually and corporately.

With Rev. Pat Kerr at the helm, we have begun to put on more '24/7 Prayer' events at Church in order to learn how we can grow in hearing from God and allow His Holy Spirit freedom to come amongst us.

The overriding 'word' we received during this last time of prayer was 'Listen to Me'. It is a great discipline for us all to take time to listen, to 'be still and know', as distractions try to come in. We are all learning on our journey of prayer. Intercession has come more to the fore this past year as we see several family members at Church going through great struggle. We are having to 'stand in the gap' and look to God's faithfulness.

We thank God for the joy of His presence and the lessons we learn when praying seems difficult. He is 'Emmanuel', God with us.

Audio-visual facilities for the 9:15 am service

Mike James & Ken McMurray

During the autumn of 2020, due to the lockdown, the 9:15 services of Holy Communion were streamed on Zoom. Mike James usually operated the sound desk, assisted by Pat Kerr on the Zoom computer and the camera. The PCC agreed to invest in new cameras and associated equipment at the beginning of December, mainly for the benefit of streaming the 11:15 service. Ken McMurray volunteered to operate the new cameras for the 9:15 service, little knowing what he was letting himself in for. The camera equipment is now like a small broadcasting studio.



We had some problems with people using Zoom for the services, because for one thing, people did not always keep themselves muted during the services. The recordings of the Zoom services were made available on St Mary's YouTube channel until mid-January, and after that the services were streamed directly to YouTube. But one of the chief complaints about receiving the 9:15 services on Zoom or on YouTube was that people were unable to hear the sound of the organ clearly.

Various suggestions were made about how to pick up the sound of the organ, but it was thanks to Tim Horton, a professional sound engineer, that we found out how to overcome the problem. Tim spent many hours tracking down the reason for the poor sound quality, and eventually found it was due to the automatic echo cancellation inherent in YouTube. Tim's recommendation was that we change over to using StreamYard, which was already in use for the 11:15 services. StreamYard enables live streaming to YouTube, with the ability to turn off the automatic echo cancellation. The result was much improved sound quality, starting from the 9:15 service on Sunday 7th February.

Using StreamYard and the new camera equipment means that there is a need for two people at the AV desk for the 9:15 service every Sunday. Mike James and Ken McMurray are there nearly every Sunday, but would welcome some more volunteers to assist them.

Formation of TAG Team and investment in new equipment

Steve Upton

With the changes imposed on the life of our church family during 2020, and the increased reliance on technology for communication, meetings, and ultimately worship, a Technical Advisory Group, or TAG for short, was formed to support David and others in the delivery of church life during and through this challenging period.

The TAG recognised the disparate nature of our IT infrastructure and supported our move to a Microsoft Windows 10 based Office 365 Tenancy, which, whilst still in its infancy in use, will continue to provide more integrated means of communication and sharing information, now on a secure platform.

Lockdown drove us from church to our homes, and at the same time to the provision of services online. Initial offerings were challenging in terms of audio and video, so the TAG scoped and helped deliver significant improvements to both the Audio and Video side of the church AV Systems to allow initially the 11:15 service, and also more recently the 9:15 service, to provide a quality online experience for many who have been unable for the larger part of the year to attend church in person.

An independent review of our online services noted that through very difficult circumstances St Mary's Risborough has managed to maintain a sense of community, even though we have for the larger part been apart. We are now looking forward to coming together again, but in so doing to continue to share the love of Christ with those who for whatever reason must remain in isolation.

Thank you to all who have been part of this journey and will continue to provide support going forward.

Special Christmas Services

Pat Kerr

This year for our Christmas services we were aware of the importance of enabling people to attend the church for the Christmas season. With the right Covid safety measures in place, we were able to offer a full Christmas programme, that included all the services we would expect to have and more. With the challenges of Covid and the difficulties many people had faced this past year, as a team we felt it was important to offer services that would bring a message of joy and hope. Our Christingle Reconnect service and our crib service, were at full attendance and a particular highlight, as many young families attended and there was a real sense of fun and laughter in spite of what we all were facing. Eventbrite gave us the platform to book people into our services and welcome people from our community into the church over Christmas, allowing them to celebrate the good news of Christ. We are thankful for the technology that has allowed us to be able to offer this hybrid model of in-person church and online worship enabling us to celebrate the important Christmas and Easter seasons within the church.

Icknield Court **Michael Hunt**

We took the decision to stop regular church services at Icknield Court in early March 2020 as the covid pandemic took hold. Sadly it has not been possible to restart any activity at the centre, and it is unclear at the time of writing (April 2021) what might be possible in the future or when activity might restart. This has been a source of frustration to the small team from across the Risborough churches who enjoyed meeting the residents and leading worship. Occasional pastoral visits have been allowed for residents at the end of life, and it is sad that there have been several deaths among the faithful band of residents who would come and sing and pray together.



Contact has been maintained with Icknield Court through Lucy, the activity co-ordinator, and prayer resources have been provided along with links for online access to St Mary's services. We hope it is not too much longer before we can resume some activity. When we do, we will be looking for more help as Avril Clark has decided to stand down. Please look out for information as and when we are able to restart our visits.

Civic Services at St Mary's **David Williams**

In line with our Church Vision and Values, we offer many different services for our local community and work closely with our Town Council and other community groups. Usually, throughout the year, there would be a number of civic services but due to the pandemic these were sadly unable to happen as large gatherings have been understandably forbidden.



What we have managed to offer, though, has been a pre-recording of services such as that which could be watched on Remembrance Sunday and the National Day of Reflection. We liaised with the Town Council, Mayor, Matt Walsh and our MP, Greg Smith to film a Remembrance Service in Church, which was then streamed on the Sunday, along with a brief video from the Town Council recording David Williams and Matt Walsh laying wreaths in private at the memorial in the town square.

Also last November a 'Time to Remember' service was held in Church for those who have lost loved ones. Names were read out in a service conducted by David Williams and candles were lit in church to remember those who have died. The service was livestreamed for those watching at home and unable to attend in person. Over the last year, not everyone was able to hold the funeral they would have wished, with strict limits on numbers attending and a shortened format. Many funerals were held at the graveside without a service in church and many people are still dealing with their grief at being unable to attend the funeral of a family member or friend. We now have the ability to livestream funerals taking place in St Mary's Church which helps when travel restrictions are in place or health issues prevent people from traveling. A joint Churches Together memorial service is being considered for later in the year.

One of the creative benefits of the lockdowns has been the reimagining that has happened as to how we can do things online and livestreamed and enable people to feel connected in this way. This has meant a great deal to many people and what it has shown is that, going forwards, we need to be more aware of those who are unable to physically attend Church services for a variety of reasons. To aid us in providing this, I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to our Technical Advisory Group (Steve Upton, Alex Rees, Tim Horton & Pat Kerr) and those who do the livestreaming for all our Sunday and midweek services.

Welcomers to Online Services

Louise Fell

Following the introduction of online services, advice from other churches suggested an online welcome was just as important as a welcome in church, and that it should be done in a similar way, acknowledging the arrival of individual members and passing the time of day with each of them. Armed with that knowledge, that is exactly what the aim has been: to welcome individual members as though they were walking into church with a warm welcome. A small team of talented welcomers emerged for the 11.15 service, and later for the 9.15 service when it went to broadcast rather than videoconference. The silver lining of being online is that the welcome can be extended to church family members and anyone else who chooses to “drop in” wherever in the country they happen to be.



Welcomers in Church

Once worship resumed in church, we were again able to have Welcomers to greet the congregation. They also undertake the important role of reminding attendees of the Covid restrictions in place at the time, and also ensuring the ‘track and trace’ lists are signed by all attending the service. We are very grateful to those who have resumed this role, or taken it on as a new task for both the 9.15am and 11.15am services.

Organ music in traditional services

Stuart King



It has been my privilege to serve in our worship every Sunday since about June 2020 when places of worship were permitted to reopen after the first period of confinement. I missed two Sundays early January 2021 when the Covid 19 incidence rates reached over 700 per 100,000 people in Bucks, fully aware of my responsibility to my wife and daughter, who are both vulnerable. To my shame, I was influenced more by scare stories than by reason because I feel much safer in church, even if I cannot wear a mask when at the console, than I ever do in the supermarket.

Music had to be adapted to the new reality, one without any congregational participation. Fully aware of how much music brings to our worship, I devised a new pattern to support the Eucharist by including pieces to illustrate the spoken Word. Organ music is chosen week by week to try to enhance the readings, especially the gospel, the psalm, the theme and the season. Pre-service preludes and the postludes follow the familiar pattern although my postlude is now usually fairly brief to allow for sanitising. The gospel recession is one indulgence the clergy have by and large been gracious in humouring me, even if there is no actual recession but it highlights the specialness of the gospel. An offertory interlude was introduced to cover the priest’s movement to the altar. A communion voluntary likewise covers the movement of the faithful to and from the Table. Not being able to sing hymns as a congregation is particularly painful but early on we thought it important to include one hymn each week. Jo has been very kind to sing on some Sundays. On other occasions, I have been blessed by volunteers reading the verses between playing the tune and variations.

As our worship was offered online, so the 09.15 service was upgraded from Zoom to You Tube. By and large the sound seems to be fairly good and my particular thanks go to the loyalty and tenacity of the sound desk duo, Mike and Ken, as well as Tim who was instrumental in using his professional know-how to upgrade the sound. My thanks also to David and Nancy Wallace for including the names and composers on the orders of service and to dear Kathryn for typing my terrifyingly polyglot repertoire, week by week.

Solo Deo Gloria.

Worship Band for 'LIVE at St Mary's'

Tim Horton

It's been a really challenging year for us as musicians and lead worshippers within "The 11:15" service community. Not that this has been unique to us, but I want to acknowledge the sacrifices that all the musicians have made in order for our Sunday worship to continue.

For some it's been a sacrifice of time, given in steadfast service to lead our musical worship. For others this sacrifice has been in not being able to play as regularly as they might have wanted due to the social distancing limitations. Yet still others have sacrificed a regular commitment to be able to focus time on caring for loved ones or in their role as professional healthcare workers.

For everyone's sacrifices in this last year I am grateful and humbled.

¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:15-16

And yet, despite this difficult season, we have been richly blessed with many worship leaders. We welcome back Simon from his 18-month sabbatical. Billy has grown in his talent as a lead worshipper, working alongside Jo. Alex has returned to a more regular involvement. Jenni has stepped in and led a handful of times, and hopefully more to come! And Chris is always on-hand to help out despite his other commitments.

It's been great to have some new musicians join in the bands too; notably Chris who is a very accomplished guitarist and Neil who has played the drums for the first time in public!

As we look ahead, I am excited most at the prospect of us all being able to sing together (very soon, I hope!). I must say, it's a very odd experience to have masked faces staring back and not hearing anyone else sing! I am also looking forward to getting back into a more consistent pattern, including a proper rota and formalised bands of musicians each week.

Finally, there are plans to host a handful of training sessions to learn more of what it is to worship through song, and to hone our craft as musicians.

Baptism Ministry

The Baptismal Team—Eleanor, Heather and Carole

This past year has been a non-starter as the last child baptised at St Mary's was on the 1st March '20. We had to suspend 4 families due to the restrictions, however during the summer the families were given the option of having a 'stand alone' baptism without a congregation and streamed music, but all declined.

We are now beginning to see the wood for the trees as there have been a further 3 families make enquires in the last few weeks whom we plan to visit after the May restrictions are lifted. I apologise in advance if there are more than the regular quota of baptisms/thanksgivings in the next few months as we try to accommodate all the families wishing to give thanks to God for the birth of their children.

Weddings at St Mary's and St Peter's

For those couples who had planned to be married in church last year, many difficult decisions had to be made about delaying their wedding dates due to the restrictive Covid guidelines applied at the time. Many decided to postpone their wedding for a year, but then as this year approached and restrictions were prolonged, dates had to be moved again. As a result, we celebrated only one wedding last year at St Peter's Church Ilmer. A truly joyful occasion even though it was necessarily small in number and no singing was allowed.



This summer we have 6 planned weddings, the first 3 happening whilst numbers are still set at 30. Stuart King has become adept at advising couples about their wedding musical choices whilst no congregational singing is allowed, and we are grateful to Mike James and Ken McMurray for helping with the cameras and playing of recorded music during these weddings. Grateful thanks to Jenny for undertaking all the administration required for wedding planning, especially as national wedding registration changes on 4th May have meant a change to the way we record and register weddings. Thank you also to our volunteers who act as Welcomers to weddings, a vital role which enables the ceremony to proceed smoothly on the day.

Service and Chalice Administrators

Tony Kerwood & Andrew Jordan

Serving our priests at the Altar during communion is a privilege and the team endeavours to maintain a high standard. During the past year we have been grateful to Andrew Jordan for acting as server when the church was open for worship whilst others on the team were shielding. We are always looking for others who have the calling to service so please speak to Tony if you would like to join the team. **16** people are authorised to administer the chalice, the gift of our Rector.

Prayer Life at St Mary's

Peter Cline

The past year has seen changes and upheavals in so many of our Church activities but, thankfully, our Prayer activities have continued despite the lack of physical gatherings. The **Prayer List** continues to highlight those members of our Church family who are in need of prayer support. Details are updated regularly and circulated to the **Prayer Chain**, a group of prayer-minded people who remember those in need in their prayers on a regular basis. We have been blessed by a number of positively answered prayers throughout the year.



Wednesday Prayers has not been able to meet physically in the Chancel every Wednesday morning at 9:00 am but has continued at that time via Zoom. Attendance has generally been higher than was formerly the case for our physical meetings. We continue with the same format – we start with a Bible reading and in the past year we have completed our reading of the later books from the New Testament, from Hebrews to the letter of Jude. Then, at Advent, we started reading the Gospel of Mark. We hope to complete Mark's Gospel by next Advent, and we will be looking for inspiration as to what to study after that.

We circulate a weekly 'thought' expanding on the passage to be read on the preceding Tuesday to those who regularly attend. After reading the chosen passage each week, we continue to pray for those in need together with situations of concern both within the Church family and worldwide. This regular Wednesday morning prayer has been running for over ten years and the number of positive responses to our prayers over the years has been amazing – living proof that the power of prayer is considerable.

We have not been producing a monthly **Prayer Bulletin** during lockdown but, with the resumption of physical services, these will, hopefully, be resumed before too long with a different theme for each month. Hopefully, these will again be found useful in prompting your Prayers to subjects relevant to our Church life. Any comments or suggestions for future issues would be appreciated.

Intercessions at the 9:15 Parish Communion continue to be lay-led and we have a number of intercessors with a variety of styles. As with all of our prayer activities, new members would be most welcome. If you feel called, please do make contact.

From time to time we produce new **Prayer Cards** to add to the selection that are found near the South Door. Please help yourself.

Prayer Ministry, as with all physical activities, has been suspended during lockdown but, again, it is hoped that this can soon be resumed at the Parish Communion on the first Sunday of each month. If you would like to join the team, please contact Averil Stephenson.

We have updated the **Prayer Page on the St Mary's website** and hope that this will help us to reach beyond the Church family and confirm that prayer is central to all our Church activities. If there is any aspect of Church life which you feel is in need of **Prayer support**, please do make contact.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Children's work

St Marys Kids' Team

It has been a challenging year for all of us as we have been unable to meet up and build relationships with our children, young people, and families. Every week, since last March, we have sent out activity packs for the younger children and families to use alongside our online services. Although our Pancake party, Light party, Christmas activity morning and the promised Messy church sessions have all had to be postponed, we have sent out Easter in a bag and Christmas in a bag craft activities, for the children to use at home. We have set sporting challenges, held our first St Mary's Bake-off competition, delivered Easter Eggs to everyone and our Advent Trail in the Churchyard in the weeks leading up to Christmas proved very popular, with children following picture clues telling the Christmas story. We have tried above everything to have a normal year.

What next?

We are beginning to start up our Sunday morning 11.15am kids' groups and the teens will be invited to join us for rounders and other wide games in the park in June. We will have pizza, hotdogs, and campfires again soon. Lighthouse is happening! Bowling nights and swimming parties will be planned, and we can't wait to see you all.

Recruitment plan for Children's & Families Worker

Louise Fell

St Mary's is looking to re-imagine its work with children after the pandemic. Despite the wonderful work done by our children's group leaders, it's vital that we relaunch this work with the enthusiasm that our children deserve. We are therefore seeking an interim Children's and Families' Worker (CFW) who will be able to help not only to re-ignite children's work and re-establish connections with our children and their families, but also to lay the foundations for a future full-time CFW in one or two years' time. The post was advertised in May and interviews are planned for mid June, in the hope of finding someone who can take a strong lead in helping us shape and develop ministry with, by, and for, children and families. This wonderful work will, we hope, start in September.

Reconnect Service

Pat Kerr

One of the greatest challenges we have had in the past year is being able to maintain contact with the younger members of our church family. Our relationships with these children and young people have been based on the relationships we've had with the families. By not having the ability to offer children's work with the church being closed we have not been able to develop our relationships with our young people and children.

With discussion with the children's ministry team, we worked together to create a once-a-month family service. These have been a mixture of being online or present in the church depending on the restrictions we have been facing. The services that have been held in the church have been a real encouragement to those that have attended. What has been a highlight of these services is that we have seen four families join us who would not normally attend any of our weekly Sunday services. This is a great encouragement and something we will look to build on going forward into the year ahead.

The children's ministry team is working on ways to develop this service and other new initiatives that will help support our children and young people. A great team makes this service possible and we will be lost without it and we are indebted to their selfless service. I look forward to continuing to see what God is doing with this mission to young families.



Longwick Church of England Combined School – report from the Governors **Diane Kerwood**

In a most extraordinary and challenging year, nevertheless it has been an exciting time to be at Longwick school as new housing developments being built in the village have brought a significant change to the diversity of our pupils – introducing a new dynamic to the school.

During the Covid 19 pandemic lockdown we are pleased to have provided an effective package to support our families. Like the majority of schools, Longwick remained open for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. For the majority of pupils, teaching and learning transferred online during periods of lockdown, which was well received by parents and pupils. For children who did not have access to technology at home, the school provided laptops to ensure their learning continued. Families were also able to collect resources such as printed worksheets, books and pencils to support home learning.

Since the return of all pupils to school, we are pleased to report that we have not seen large gaps in pupils' learning as a result of COVID-19, mainly due to the success of online teaching and pupil/parental engagement. Children have largely returned to school happy and while there has been some need to support a small number of pupils with their wellbeing, generally the resilience of the children at Longwick has been evident during this time.

Throughout the year our Executive Head Teacher has been responsible for implementing a successful programme of school improvement and Governors are now looking to appoint a new Head Teacher to join us in our aspirational journey – the chosen candidate will embrace and contribute to the essential Christian ethos of the school while respecting and valuing those of all faiths or none.



Lighthouse

Vicky Bant

The aim of Lighthouse is to provide an opportunity for children, young people and adults to learn more about God's amazing love for us and understand the difference Jesus can make to our lives. Princes Risborough Lighthouse continues to grow year on year with Little Lighthouse and the 4-5s age group growing by the largest margin each year. In 2019 we had 492 children register and 167 volunteers.

With the pressures of the COVID pandemic, a decision was taken in April 2020 not to run Princes Risborough Lighthouse. All meetings were run virtually via Zoom, fundraising and donations ceased. Working with Lighthouse Central, we assisted them in working towards a 'virtual Lighthouse' during the week 27 – 31 July. The theme and teaching Hidden Heroes started at 10am with an hour-long LIVE show full of songs, actions, messy games, drama, craft, stories, and prayer! Once the LIVE show had finished there were various activities available to watch throughout the day and a craft activity for the children to complete at home. At 4pm Lighthouse Central went LIVE again with more music and games. Positive feedback was received into Lighthouse Central.

As a result of cancelling Lighthouse, our financial level of support dramatically reduced but not to the point that it would bring about insolvency. Indeed, we donated £1000 towards Virtual Lighthouse and parents donated directly to Lighthouse Central. Our Reserves have been maintained and I will be ensuring that going into 2021, Princes Risborough Lighthouse will proceed in the best interests of our charity and in line with COVID restrictions. We have taken the decision to run Lighthouse this year but under a different format and working out of the churches. Please look out for requests to volunteer in different roles—we need you to help this happen!





Safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults has been an important aspect of PCC business in 2020-21. The main actions are summarised below, but it is vital to encourage everyone to be alert to safeguarding principles so they know what to do if they are worried about a child or adult.

1 Improvements to safeguarding information on the Church website

Information about safeguarding is now easier to find and signposting to where to get help or report a concern is clearer.

2 Change of Parish Safeguarding Officer

Jenny King stood down as PSO in March 2021 and Tony Eccleston has taken over as interim PSO. We are grateful to Jenny for carrying this responsibility. Tony would in turn be happy to hand over to someone who would like to make this a major part of their contribution to Church life. Jenny is continuing in a support capacity, for which we are also very grateful.

3 Promoting a Safer Church Action Plan

PCC has approved a plan based on a model published by the Diocese in December 2020. Some actions required decisions of the PCC and these are set out below.

4 Safeguarding Policy (item 1 of the Plan)

A revised Safeguarding Policy document has been approved. This is also based on the latest Diocesan model policy. A copy is displayed in Church and posted on the website.

5 Promoting a Safer Church Policy (item 2 of the Plan)

'Promoting a Safer Church' is the safeguarding policy statement of the Church of England for children, young people and adults. It is published as a short booklet and a copy can be found on the Church of England website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding>. PCC members were recommended to read the statement and it is commended to all Church Officers.

6 Recruitment of Ex-Offenders (item 3 of the Plan)

In line with Diocesan advice the PCC has adopted a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders.

7 Responding to Concerns or Allegations (item 4 of the Plan)

The PCC adopted a procedure to deal promptly with any safeguarding concern or allegation (including any suspicion of abuse). The procedure is set out in Section 7 of the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook which can be viewed or downloaded from the Church of England website and is available from the parish office. No safeguarding concerns or allegations have been received in the last year.

8 Church Officers' Responsibilities (item 6 of the Plan)

The roles of churchwardens and others in safeguarding are set out in the document 'Know Your Safeguarding Role' which was produced in connection with national Church of England safer recruitment training. PCC has used this document in raising awareness of safeguarding responsibilities.

9 Learning from elsewhere

Reports of investigations into incidents in other parts of the Diocese have been shared as a means of ensuring that lessons learned are passed on, and especially the message that any concerns about worrying behaviour should be shared with the appropriate people.

10 Conclusion

As the Action Plan is implemented further documents will be brought to the PCC together with an updated version of the Plan itself. All of this is directed to ensuring that we know that safeguarding is everyone's business.



Pastoral Care

David Williams

As you can imagine, over this past year this has been an area of Church ministry that we have been very much engaged in. Liaising with our pastoral care visitors, Eleanor McGregor has headed this up marvellously working with myself and others. People have been picking up prescriptions for neighbours, making regular phone calls, making bereavement visits, and doing general doorstep visits, and we even started a weekly pastoral letter (thanks to Louise Fell and her distributors!) to help people feel connected who don't have access to the internet. So there has been plenty going on! We also found ourselves creatively working out different ways of doing things during the pandemic – like hand delivering Mothering Sunday posies and Palm Crosses or providing a Tree of Hope in the Churchyard, to which people attached ribbons with names on in thankfulness for those who have been helping in our community. The list goes on! There were also hand delivered cards expressing thanks to those in our High Street and local community that have been serving those in our community – from the doctors' surgeries to cafes and our Town Council, who helped so much with the Risborough Basket. Can I also mention the monthly Bereavement Drop-In group that has been able to re-start and a particular thanks to Rose Williams, who oversees these very valuable meetings.

Deserving a separate and particular 'thank you', we must mention here the work of the Risborough Food Cupboard that ran out of our Church. The Steering team worked so hard, liaising with town council, charities or the other Churches in Risborough and it was delightful to see over 50 volunteers from across the local Churches and wider community working together to serve those in need in our community. An interesting outworking of this project, by the way, was that we included community carol singing in some of our roads last Christmas and it was a real joy to see how uplifting this was for the residents, many of whom we had had much more contact with through the pandemic.

We have been called to love one another as God has loved us and it is such a joy to see the many ways in which this is expressed through our Church family, including the way in which people can become more connected through our Life Groups. May this area of our Church's life go from strength to strength in the coming years!

Pastoral Care

Jenny Deverill

Pastoral Care is an expression of God's love revealed through the action of one person to another. It is a commitment to stand alongside another sharing and supporting them through their time of need. As they go forth on this journey together, may both the giver and the receiver grow more deeply in their faith that Jesus Christ, through his life, death and resurrection, brings eternal light and life in the midst of darkness.

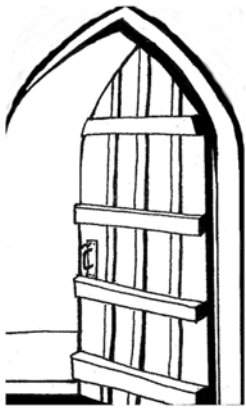
"This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loves us so much, we ought to love one another." 1.John 4.10-11

Over the past year, St Mary's, like all churches throughout the UK, has faced a greater demand and need for Pastoral Care within our church family. We have also recognised the vital basic needs of those around us in our wider community, with the establishment through the Risborough churches coming together and providing a much needed and greatly valued foodbank.

Thanks to updating and recording a list of all members of St Mary's, during the times we were unable to attend services in church, relevant information with all details of parish life were able to be received through our letterboxes or on-line across all the parish. Over the periods of lockdown many church members have taken on responsibility for constant communication one to another, through regular phone calls, shopping for the housebound, caring especially for those in special need and offering up our prayers in thanksgiving and supplication. New and deeper relationships have been formed and are still continuing.

We are not fully out of lockdown yet as I write. We must be open and understanding to differing responses when it

happens. It is incumbent upon us all to welcome back those who are ready to attend live worship, but not to forget we still have a duty of Pastoral Care to all including those who have anxieties and a reluctance to return to the old normality.



OPEN DOOR

Denys and Brenda Williams

Like so many other activities Open Door has been on hold during COVID. However, we recognised the importance of keeping contact with our 40 plus regular attendees, the majority of whom live on their own. With the help of our volunteers, we have kept in telephone and doorstep contact with them. In addition, using our accumulated funds, at Christmas we gave out over 40 presents and cards. At Easter they all received Easter Eggs along with a card. Thanks to Frances Ibell for providing the cards in support of Ian Rennie. They all ask, 'When is Open Door restarting?'. Sadly, we cannot answer that question. We have been involved in helping and then running Open Door for over 20 years. Our main helpers, like us, are at a stage of life when we should be on the receiving end of this outreach programme! So sadly we have decided the time is right to step

down from organising Open Door.

A big thank you to Hilary Derbyshire, Susan Hopkins, Elaine Needham and Joyce Wooster for their support over the years. Open Door has been a valuable outreach programme and we hope St Mary's will be able to continue to offer support to so many of our lonely within our community.

Our warmest thanks to Brenda and Denys for all their dedicated service to those attending Open Door over the years. Your care and compassion for the regulars has been especially appreciated over the last year.

Operation Sheepfold

Eleanor McGregor, Pastoral Care Coordinator

This was set up by St Mary's during the Pandemic as an outreach ministry in response to a need to provide support for the church family, and in particular those who lived alone, have been recently bereaved or generally needed to know that the church is still there even though we haven't been able to attend services or meet friends.

A new database has been created to allow David to identify those in need, which has been invaluable as it was used to give a comprehensive view of the whole church family and also those who receive support by the various groups but don't attend church, for example the excellent work undertaken by Denys and Brenda Williams who run Open Door for the older people in the community.

A group of volunteers was recruited and each person was given a list of people to contact on a regular basis, and they have done a sterling job, not only making phone calls, but also distributing the Christmas and Easter Cards to everyone. The database was used for the Mother's Day flowers and I thank all those who collected posies of daffodils to deliver to neighbours and friends who were not able to attend church under their own steam.



We are also now keeping up contact with the bereaved families of those whose funerals have been held at St Mary's, and also the families who come to us for baptisms.

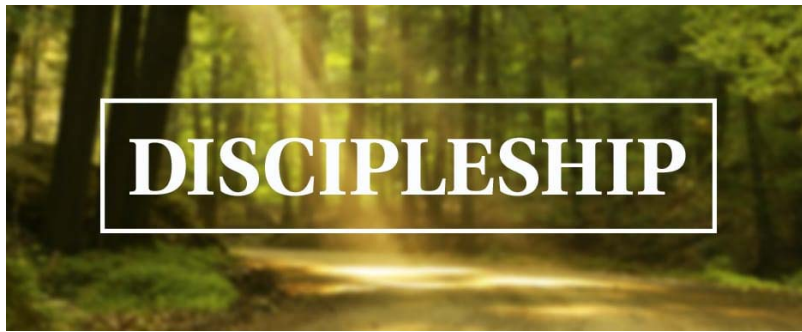
Please can I ask that if you know of anyone who is unwell and would find comfort from receiving a Get Well card or would like prayer, that you contact the parish office with details. Many thanks, in anticipation as together we can get better at providing pastoral care.

The Bereavement Group

Rose Williams



The Bereavement Drop In has met on and off this year. We were allowed to meet all through being a support group but some months it did not feel safe to meet. We are now back to regular meetings on the second Monday of each month at 3pm in the Chapter House. The group is very supportive of each other and we welcome anyone who has been bereaved recently or in the past but are still coming to terms with their loss.



Advent and Lent Courses

Tony Eccleston

In 2020 St Mary's ran a short course of four Wednesday evening sessions about Advent in common with Churches Together in Risborough for whom we produced discussion notes. The course was based on Gordon Giles' book of daily reflections *At Home in Advent*. Gordon is Canon Chancellor of Rochester Cathedral and the author of several books. In this one he focuses on the everyday things that we associate with this time of year and reflects on their spiritual significance, meaning and message. Advent can be a discomfiting and disconcerting time, during which the church has traditionally invited us to reflect on sin, judgement and death, if only to help us appreciate all the more the illuminating presence of the Word made flesh, shining in the darkness, whose first coming enables us not to be overcome by fear or despair.

Our 2021 Lent course was based on Jeff Lucas' book *Singing in Babylon* and also run in partnership with other CTR churches. It looked at the life of Daniel. 600 years before Christ, Daniel was taken as a young man from Jerusalem to life-long exile in Babylon. For many of the people in the small kingdom of Judah this catastrophe seemed a result of God's judgement. Daniel and his friends were themselves faithful to God but got caught up in events. What Lucas addresses is how to live a life you would not have chosen for yourself - a second choice life. The good news is that we can not only survive but thrive. For the moment we are called to be resident aliens, both a challenge to the culture in which we live and a joyful witness that the best is yet to come.



Summer Discipleship Course—Pete Greig on Prayer

Pat Kerr

Over the past year, the church has offered numerous discipleship courses. Our autumn study was on Pete Greig's 'How to pray'. Those who attended from home via zoom found this course to be a real blessing and helpful in enabling them to pray. They liked how it encouraged the different elements of prayer by using the Lord's prayer as a structure.

In the autumn we will be running Pete Greig's follow-up course on prayer, as we continue to seek new ways of doing prayer in our own lives and the life of our church. If you are interested in joining, please contact the Church office.

Longwick Life Group

Tony Eccleston



This group started life as one thing and ended up as another. It began as a Lent course group in 2020 to study the book by Ruth Valerio 'Saying Yes to Life'. Barely had it got going than Covid-19 restrictions stopped the group meeting indoors and it moved online. After Lent it just kept going!

Now the format is half an hour's chat on Zoom to catch up with local events followed by a 10-minute contemporary service of Evening

Prayer. The group consists of members of St Mary's living in Longwick and has the potential to reach out to more. If you would like to join us contact tony.eccleston@btinternet.com



REFRESH (Bluebells and Sunflowers)

Jo Williams

This year, we decided to split into two groups as numbers had grown to 14 which became too large for one group. This decision has reaped dividends as friendships have been an invaluable support during Covid and the two groups have formed deep bonds of friendship.

We have both kept meeting every Friday at 10.30am on Zoom. Our gatherings follow a similar format each time. We begin by catching up, and then pray asking God to speak to us as we meet. Diving into a study whether it be a Bible book or resource book always strengthens our discipleship. We have studied all sorts of books, including the 'minor prophets' and some of us are still enjoying Jeff Lucas's 'Singing in Babylon' well after Easter. Our two groups always enjoy good discussion and try to employ personal application around what we learn. As we close our studying, we spend a further time in prayer as we feel led. (The Bluebell group are very blessed to receive a Blessing from Jenny Deverill).

From time to time, the two groups get excited about meeting up as one big gathering. We celebrate birthdays whenever we can! Our favourite venues out of lockdown are Holly Green Farm, Stockwell Lane Farm and each others' homes and gardens.

We are always very delighted to welcome any new ladies who might wish to join us. In the past year, we have been pleased to welcome back Clare Bellini, and to greet Helen Orchard and Gill Wilkinson.



Refresh is what is says on the tin! We really do get refreshed and thank God for this highlight in our week.

Care for Creation *Garth Wilkinson*

For those interested to know more about this, I make a (usually weekly) input to, or associated with, the Pastoral Network email newsletter highlighting any topical issues or hints and tips related to Christian Care for Creation.



For the past year I have run an associated Care for Creation Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/237892274020811>. The aim of this is to emphasise the 5th Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion: ***"To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth"***.

This Care for Creation group aims to disciple Christian Care for God's Creation. When originally set up, this project was aimed at looking to see how the church could move incrementally towards a more "environmentally friendly" lifestyle in terms of urgent factors such as mitigating climate change, pollution of air, land and water, extinction of species, etc. This follows the General Synod Declaration of a Climate Emergency in February 2020. However, over the past year, nature has thrown us a much greater, though related, environmental challenge - how to Care for Creation in view of the SARS-Cov-2 (Covid-19) virus pandemic and its effect on our global neighbours and ourselves. This has shifted the focus of the Page somewhat, although the underlying mission remains unchanged.

Links to various news items and webinars are posted there, including the "About our environment programme | The Church of England" (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/about-our-environment-programme>), in particular the "Net zero carbon church | The Church of England" (<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church>).

For information, most of the webinar recordings to date are posted on the ChurchCare - YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2L-xSd1sxt7MPPHDjp_jzA/videos. Webinars on 7-12 June will concentrate on "Webinars on land and nature, for Churches Count on Nature Week | The Church of England" (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/webinars-land-and-nature-churches-count-nature-week>).

Then on 7 & 9 September there will be new Webinars on environmental fundraising.



Aylesbury Deanery

David Williams

There are 38 Churches within our Deanery, that is a way of locally grouping Churches within a Diocese. These Churches range from new Church plants, some without Church buildings, to Churches that have been around for many years and they span an area that is both urban and rural. This means we have an enriched life together, supporting one another from our different settings. To encourage the mission and ministries of these different Churches we hold regular meetings with the Clergy and Local Lay Minsters (called Chapter meetings) and Deanery Synod meetings where Clergy, LLMs and Church representatives gather for prayer and fellowship with input from visiting speakers.

To give you a flavour of our Synod meetings, as well as considering missional initiatives (and in this past year we have had a particular focus on the Churches in northern Aylesbury, whilst also considering others), we also make time to consider vacancies and finances and Deanery grants given to mission projects, issues of wellbeing, and occasional discussions on contemporary issues. Over the last year we were unable to hold most of our Synod meetings due to the pandemic but we did have more recently a visiting speaker from the Town Centre Chaplaincy, Aylesbury and a lively discussion about how we have been responding to the pandemic and plans/ideas for when we emerge out of national restrictions. A great help with these meetings are David Lillycrop, our Lay Chair, Ann Beaton, our Deanery Secretary, and Tania Dovey, our Deanery treasurer and my two Assistant Area Deans, Jonathan Hawkins and Richard Phillips.

Aylesbury Deanery Synod

Debby Cadwallader

Our churches of St Mary's and St Peter's are within Aylesbury Deanery, comprising 38 churches. To encourage the mission and ministry of the churches we hold regular meetings for the clergy, (called Chapter meetings), as well as Deanery Synods, where clergy and parish representatives gather for prayer, fellowship and discussion. The Synod is led by the Area Dean, who is our Rector, David Williams and our parish representatives are: David Lillycrop, who is also the Lay Chairman, John Hardy and Debby Cadwallader.

In June 2020 the Standing Committee of the Deanery Synod cancelled the planned meeting because of the restrictions introduced during the pandemic crisis.

One of the synod's responsibilities is to manage the process of its parishes paying their Parish Share, each parish's contribution, to the diocese. In July the Synod received a message from Oxford Diocese recognizing the difficulties that many parishes were experiencing in raising their usual funds during the crisis and offering advice on finding new ways to raise giving.

The meeting planned for Nov 2020 was deferred and the Synod finally met, via Zoom, on 27th Jan 2021. Catherine Turnbull-Ross gave a very moving report on the work of the Aylesbury Town Chaplaincy, whose mission is 'loving the heart of our town'. About 30 volunteers from 20 churches, including our St Mary's, provide support such as Street Angels who go out into the town centre from 10.30pm to 3.30am to help the vulnerable and homeless. Some of their work has been curtailed by the current restrictions, but help has been provided by phone and online.



David Williams then led an interactive discussion in which we shared our churches' experiences of lockdown and the various ingenious ways that congregations had found to continue to spread the gospel. It was agreed that there was much to be thankful for.

The treasurer reported that this year some churches have struggled to pay their parish share in full. However, during the year the Deanery secured £238,000 of diocesan development funding. This is one of the largest such grants made to date, and will help the parishes of north Aylesbury to meet the challenges of both new and neglected housing estates, and to share their gifts and experience more widely through a North Aylesbury Team Resourcing Hub, and will ensure continuing ministry at Quarrendon. It is also very pleasing to report that a new Team Vicar has been appointed to serve at St Dunstan's Monks Risborough and a new Rector of Wychert Vale (Haddenham and surrounding villages)) has been licensed.

St Mary's Princes Risborough and St Peter's Ilmer are two of eight Churches that go to make up our Anglican Team Churches. Over this past year, one of the ways of staying connected has been through the Clergy meeting regularly over Zoom (something we hardly knew about before the pandemic and now is an everyday word in our conversations!). During our meetings we are able to encourage one another with missional work we are engaged in and sharing good pastoral practice, consider any challenges with our Church buildings and resources and the need to provide online worship as well as in-person worship, and praying for one another. We have also helped one another out with the taking of funerals and other services, where this has been needed, and this is certainly one of the benefits of being part of a Team of Churches.

St Dunstan's, Monks Risborough, and St Peter's, Owlswick, have been in vacancy through this past year and it has been important to help them during this time, through chairing their PCC Leadership Team meetings, meeting



regularly with their Churchwardens and treasurer, and steering them through the vacancy process. Alongside my own involvement, I have been ably assisted by Can Rob Brown whom I would like to particularly thank, as he has given so much of his time and energy to this parish in their time of need. He has also been helped by a few of our retired Clergy who are such a blessing locally and have been greatly appreciated, and, as we know, Kathryn (in our Church Office) has played her part with the admin side of things. Throughout this time, it has been good to see new people coming forward and offering to help and the Church reaching out to those in need, and I do pray this will continue as we enter into a next chapter with the Licensing of their new Team Vicar,

Revd Peter Godden on 13th July. Please remember them in your prayers.

Finally, I know my Clergy colleagues would want to acknowledge the many Church members we have across our Churches who help in their different ways with the mission and ministry of each of our Churches.

As we go forward in our communities into a season of recovery may God bless us all richly as we do so recognising 'It's Better Together'!

Churches Together in Risborough

Tony Eccleston

Churches Together in Risborough is a collaborative arrangement that aims to support local churches in *"Working together in unity to serve the Community in God's love and for God's glory"*. We achieve this by sharing news and experience of services and activities and by supporting some joint events.



In 2020-21 the CTR Committee met three times by Zoom, in May, October and January. Each meeting was chaired by the Rev Vanessa Rye of Princes Risborough Baptist Church and included talks, such as on new housing, as well as business. The meeting on 8 October was the AGM, and amongst other things confirmed that there was a small but balanced budget. Throughout the last year Covid-19 placed severe restrictions on what could be done, but there were several events. They included the following:

- Support for a virtual Lighthouse programme.
- An Advent course based on the book *At Home in Advent* by Gordon Giles. St Mary's took the lead in producing discussion notes.
- Plans for an outdoor Advent service in November which had to be abandoned because of the second Covid-19 lockdown.
- A Christmas Eve Carol on the Doorstep event.
- A service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on 24 January.
- A Lent course based on the book *Singing in Babylon* by Jeff Lucas. Again St Mary's produced the discussion notes.
- An Easter Trail around CTR churches.
- These are all examples of the group's inspired creativity in difficult circumstances and all helped to maintain a sense of being one in Christ.



The Princes Centre



Maggie Wooster Keyte

Like other organisations, this last year has been very challenging for the Princes Centre but we are pleased to report that, thanks to the financial support from the Government with the furlough scheme, Buckinghamshire Council and a number of grants including a very generous one from St Mary's PCC, we have remained financially stable and are looking forward to a better year ahead. We are in a good position as our role model for day care has been acknowledged by Buckinghamshire Council as successful and we have been able to give advice to other organisations when required.

Although the Centre had to be closed during the two lockdowns the main hall was made available during the first period of closure for the Council to use for the Risborough Basket Scheme which has benefitted so many of the residents. During the last period of closure the trustees took the opportunity to organise the refurbishment of the main hall using a grant from the Co-op following an application made the previous year.

Whilst the centre was open it was, and still is, operating under strict new procedures to ensure the safety of the clients and staff and we are very pleased that no-one caught covid under our watch. The staff and clients coped very well despite the restrictive regime. Unfortunately volunteers are still unable to return to the centre but all being well we hope to be able to open the doors to the volunteers and guests [and the trustees!] in June, in line with the government's road map. Kim, our manager is already making plans for entertainments and trips.

Our clients were all thrilled to be able to return and have been happily involved in various socially-distanced activities. Numbers are steadily building back to previous levels as inevitably a number of our elderly clients passed away or were admitted to nursing homes, during the last year. Sadly, one of our trustees, Bill Bendyshe-Brown also passed away although he remained very active almost to the end and we are very thankful for his long involvement with the Centre.

The trustees, in looking to the future, are planning further projects with the aim of reducing our carbon footprint. At present work is in hand to make some improvements at the Centre at Bourne End and a local group, the Friends of Bourne End, have been raising funds for this.

The trustees would like to express their gratitude to all of you at St Mary's Church for the continuous support we have received from you and wish you all a speedy return to normality.

Princes Risborough Food Cupboard

Roger Arthey

The Princes Risborough Food Cupboard was set up in St Mary's Church in May 2020 by Churches Together in Risborough with support from Princes Risborough Town Council and Parish Charity to provide free food to those struggling with food poverty. The first Covid-19 lockdown was a trigger for action and the mission of PRFC was to provide food aid during the worst of the pandemic.

Since inception just under a year ago, PRFC has provided over 1400 food parcels. Today we deliver parcels of food and other essentials to over 35 households each week, a total of some 120 people.

We are grateful for generous donations of money from individuals and also from organisations including the Town Council, the Risborough Charity, Princes Risborough Rotary, Risborough Residents' Association and the Carrington Trust, and today we have a healthy cash surplus to cover our weekly expenditure.



We also receive generous donations of food and other goods. We publish a list of items that we are particularly short of each week. People bring items to the church during operating hours, or leave them in the dedicated basket at the entrance to Tesco during opening hours. Tesco kindly adds 20% to donations collected there, and also helps each week with the provision of fresh goods: bread, pastries, eggs, fruit and vegetables etc.

We are also grateful for our team of approximately 50 dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. Volunteers meet on a rota basis at St Mary's Church on Wednesday and Friday mornings to buy items from Tesco, pack the goods into parcels, and deliver them to people's homes. Some liaise with our clients to understand their needs, and others

manage the finances, planning, stocktaking and re-stocking. Their service was recognised when we were awarded the **Mayor's Civic Award for Community Group of the year 2020**. Congratulations to everyone involved.

We pray for everyone involved, and especially for the families we deliver to, that they will be blessed by the gift, and that they will soon no longer require this support.

Tree of Hope: celebrating our Community Heroes

Kathryn Trout

During the summer we asked people to celebrate our community heroes by tying a ribbon onto a our 'tree of hope' in front of the church and writing on it the name of the person they wanted to celebrate. We were aware that during Lockdown 1 a new feeling of community had been fostered in Risborough with neighbours helping out those shielding by fetching shopping and prescriptions, but also others were working hard on our behalf: our NHS workers, supermarket staff, emergency workers, the Town Council team behind the Risborough Basket initiative, carers and charity volunteers.

Despite the sadness, loss and isolation experienced during the pandemic, there was a feeling of hope and many benefited from the acts of kindness provided by hitherto unknown strangers. It was lovely to see those ribbons brightly decorating our tree and a visible symbol of those who were shining the light of Christ for all to see.



Historic Churches Bike Ride 2020 — Pleasurable Pedalling Produces Pounds

Michael Hoey

We raised a **record £2,585** on Saturday 12th September. So, with the Gift Aid claimed, half has gone to the Bucks Historic Churches Trust, and the remaining **£1,588** goes towards St Mary's building/repair costs in 2021.

Throughout the county, it was another fine day, not even any wind! Our **2** cyclists (Ken McMurray & I) visited **45 churches** between them, travelling over **75 miles**. Well, some of that was "virtual"! For family reasons, I was in quarantine, so did my planned route on an exercise bike in the garden; mostly flat, but I dialled up the resistance to max for the hills at Brill, Ashendon and Winchendon!!

11 walkers/cyclists visited St Peter's that day. Meanwhile, Val Stattersfield ran a wonderful team of **8** who **welcomed 53 visitors** to St Mary's. By comparison, back in 2007, we saw 94 visitors, and that was another sunny day!

A really good day, and especially pleasing for us, in a year when so many cyclists and churches did not partake around the country. Congratulations to the fund-raising cyclists, our gratitude to the stalwart church welcomers and lots of thanks to the generous sponsors (71 of them!).

After 20 years as Aylesbury Deanery Coordinator, and 25 years as the Parish Rep, I have stood down. The next ride is on Saturday **11th September 2021**.



Mission and Charitable Giving

Kaye Lillycrop

At St Mary's we give more than 20% of total Church income to a wide variety of charities; local, national and international. Each September, based on your nominations, the PCC chooses a charity to receive financial support for three years (major award). Six other charities are given a one-year grant (minor award). This year we are supporting:

Major Awards

ROPE 2021 (Philip Derbyshire)*

Christian Aid 2020 (Debby and Jim Cadwallader)*

CMS Uganda- Nicci Maxwell 2019 (Lizzie Tinsley)*

Minor Awards

The Children's Society (Diana Parker)*

Operation Noah (Garth Wilkinson)*

Hamlin Fistula UK (Kaye Lillycrop)*

Tearfund (Garth Wilkinson)*

London City Mission (Sally Edwards)*

* "Champion" for this charity

We also support our chosen charities through:

- prayer
- links via life groups
- groups going out from St Mary's to see the charities at work
- direct giving
- inviting preachers from the charities to visit

Last September we supported the ROPE "Women Walking for Women" event with a number of St Mary's walkers and many generous sponsors. This Lent we ran an appeal to fund a much needed item of medical equipment for our CMS mission partner, Nicci Maxwell, in Uganda. She and some of her staff sent a wonderful video message of thanks which was shown at our Easter Day services.

Please do talk to the "champion" for a charity to find out more about their work and consider holding an event to fundraise. If you are already supporting a charity then consider submitting its name for a grant from St Mary's. Application forms are available in June.

Christian Aid

Jim Cadwallader

In September 2019 the PCC voted to support Christian Aid as one of its 'major award' charities, which meant in practice that they would receive over £6,000 a year for three years. The first payment was made in autumn 2020. We opted to do this through their partnership scheme, which attracts matched funding from 'Bread for Life' boosting our £6,000 to over £40,000. We chose Christian Aid's Iraq Lebanon Partnership as the target of our support.



The Syrian conflict has triggered the biggest displacement crisis of this century. In addition to the 6.5 million displaced internally by the conflict, more than 5 million Syrians have fled as refugees, and the vast majority are now living in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Iraq has been suffering from a continuous humanitarian crisis as a result of war and internal political and ethnic conflicts. The toll of conflict since the 2014 rise of Islamic State has been enormous, and exacerbated by the brutal conflict in Syria. Whilst the humanitarian context in Iraq has transitioned into a new phase, there remain 6.7 million people in need of assistance, 1.7 million internally displaced persons and 253,000 Syrian refugees.

Lebanon, with a population of approximately 4 million people, hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, per capita. One in four of the Lebanese population is a Syrian refugee in addition to the 450,000 registered Palestinian refugees.

Those who are displaced are often marginalised from the wider host community, from education, access to health, legal services, and employment. Marginalisation makes them more vulnerable, and they are often perceived as a threat by the host community. Without schools to go to, children are forced into begging or child labour, including prostitution, to support their families.

Christian Aid's project provides services including education and vocational training, directly benefitting over 2,000 people and they seek to promote greater integration and social cohesion by bringing together beneficiaries from different communities, ethnicities and religious groups.

Thank you for your support.

GAAF (GIDEON ANTI-AIDS FOUNDATION)

Jo Williams

I am delighted to report much good news from GAAF, a charity dear to my heart.

- Gideon, whom many of you have met on his visits to the UK, recovered from serious Covid. It was a miracle that he survived and that Fred, who cared for him, did not become infected. Everyone is safe and well.
- GAAF has become fully self sufficient. Even during Covid, they were able to support many from Bombo, the local village where many residents fell into poverty through lack of work
- Gideon has given more responsibility to Fred for the running of GAAF which will be excellent for the future.
- The youngsters who remain at GAAF who have sponsors still regularly receive an education. We are so grateful to members of our Church and community who have been committed for both longer or shorter lengths of times to help a child.
- Rebuilding of the Guest House. During a big storm, the roof blew off but all damage has been repaired.
- Victo has recently been married to her fiancé, Joshua. They will have two ceremonies, firstly a Traditional Wedding and then a Church Wedding! The first reception was held at GAAF and it was a splendid affair. We await photos of the second celebration.
- Mulindwa's Rabbit Farm, Goats, Chickens All kinds of enterprises are undertaken at GAAF, some which stay the course and others which don't, but wonderfully the large acreage of crops have mostly thrived. Thank you again to all of you who pray, give and simply ask about GAAF. It is a very small 'star' in a huge galaxy but God has given us so much blessing through our partnership with our GAAF family.



The Children's Society *Diana Parker*

St. Mary's has always supported this Church of England Charity protecting the needs of our vulnerable children.

Fundraising:

- Box Collection in February 2020 - £1,385.70
- The Parish Award - £6,495
- Christingle Collections - £147.30

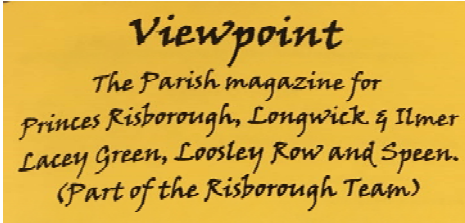


This last year has been a very difficult one as a result of Covid. As always Zoe Hinton has been a great strength as Box Collection Secretary despite the setbacks presented by Covid and cash handling.

For the last 30 years I have along with my husband David happily worked on behalf of St Mary's to support the Society. We feel that it is now the time for us to resign and trust that The Parish Office is able to find someone from a younger generation to champion its cause for the future. *There are desperate children we should not abandon.*



Viewpoint *Jim Cadwallader*



When Covid struck and we entered lockdown in March 2020, production and distribution of our monthly parish magazine, Viewpoint, stopped. It has remained in abeyance since. In the course of this year decisions will have to be made about its future.

The church has found new ways of communicating to most people. Our Viewpoint distributors, many of whom had served for many years, indeed decades in many cases, are elderly and several have indicated a desire to retire. Members of our editorial team have had health issues. All of which may be giving us a sign regarding the future. Thank you to everyone who has helped with Viewpoint over the years, contributors, producers, distributors, advertisers and readers.

Website *Hilary Derbyshire*

As our churches closed for worship when the country went into lockdown in March 2020, the website suddenly got very busy. More and more church members were turning to the website to find out what was happening in the church. Inevitably there was a much greater dependence on our electronic channels for communication and the website is a key part of that. For over 20 years I have managed the church website and I have never before spent so much time keeping everything up to date. Virtually every day something new and urgent has arrived in my inbox.

The design of the website home page had to change as a result of the church's need to do things differently. Parts of the website that had always been very important, were now of much less significance and new things - orders of service, weekly lists of Food Cupboard needs, information on local sources of help for people in lockdown - all needed displaying in slots of prime visibility. It has often been challenging to accommodate all of this.

As I write this report, I am involved in our latest venture, namely online giving. The experiences of these 'Covid times' have accelerated and brought into sharper focus the trend to do things online; providing a way for a virtual congregation to support our church financially is important.

Looking to the future, it seems likely that this increased use of the website will continue. I would really appreciate some help with website maintenance and would be happy to give training to willing volunteers.

Daily Facebook Thoughts *Jenny King*

This last year has presented us with some challenging times and many people have found life very difficult. One of the things that has kept many people going is our daily Facebook thoughts.

Published every day apart from Sunday, these thoughts have provided inspiration, hope, guidance and joy to their readers. Themes have ranged from the bible readings of the week, prayer, current Church festivals, characters from the bible and history, the wonders of God's world, personal testimonies and inspirational films. In fact, any subject that the writer may feel gives hope to the reader in these covid times.

A huge thanks goes to our team of writers who have produced such amazing thoughts on a very regular basis. Thank you for keeping us all going and giving us hope, spreading God's love and brightening our day in this most difficult of years.



Enews *Jenny King*

In this past year we have been unable to meet in Church in the usual way. There has therefore been no need for the traditional newssheet. We have therefore had to reply on electronic communications and one of these is the weekly enews.

With currently 151 subscribers, we reach a large number of the congregation who can access this newsletter on their phones, ipads or computers. Usually sent out on a Thursday, the enews gives details of the week's services, events, news and anything else that might be going on which may be of interest to the subscriber.

Signing up for the enews is easy, just go to the St Mary's website and click where it says 'sign up for enews'. All we need is your email address. Or you can contact the Office.

Pastoral Newsletter *Louise Fell*

The weekly Pastoral Newsletter was born early in lockdown 1.0 out of a need to keep the church family connected. Other forms of communication such as the weekly news sheets in church and the monthly Viewpoint magazine were necessarily put on the back burner at a time when it was very important to let the church family know that, although the building was closed temporarily, our church was very much open for business. A small communications team formed, meeting remotely every Tuesday, for a whistle stop tour of the key messages that the audience might appreciate. It aims to deliver the day's Thought from Facebook to those who might not otherwise see it, some key information about what's happening with church and elsewhere, as much good news as possible, and some prayer points to help focus us on the things that are important.

Most people receive the newsletter either directly as an email, or cascaded via their Life Group or other pastoral group, and some are able to have a paper copy hand delivered to their door by a small and dedicated team of deliverers. Many readers have been very appreciative of the newsletter, emailing their thanks, or their good news stories for sharing in the following edition.

Data Protection *Paul Seward*

The behaviours required of the church due to COVID have disrupted church life and, in particular, prevented the church from moving forward with new initiatives. Consequently, there have been no new datasets to be monitored. Hopefully the year ahead will allow us to take forward the ideas that members of the church have had over the last year, and the use of data by those will need to be reviewed when they start up. There will also be a need to ensure that we understand who are the custodians of existing data and that they understand their responsibilities.

The Church Office *Kathryn Trout*

The Church Office closed during Lockdown 1, with Jenny and myself working remotely from home on our own computers. This proved problematic as we were unable to access necessary computer files and access to the email system was limited. From July we were able to work back in the office but worked alternate shifts to minimise contact and visitors were by appointment only. Over the summer the TAG team finalised their recommendations for moving the office system to Microsoft Office, which enables remote working and collaborative working in Teams. Thanks are due to Steve Upton for purchasing and configuring the new computers and to Alex Rees for setting up the office system and providing a day's training and initial support. We now have an IT support contract with an external company to ensure we can overcome any software and hardware issues going forward. During Lockdowns 2 & 3 we were able to work more efficiently from home and then return to the office as restrictions eased. We plan to open the office to visitors once more when the Government announces Step 4 in June.

The workload of the office has changed over lockdown due to Covid-related requirements. I was closely involved in compiling the Risk Assessments for opening the church for private prayer and then worship, and I am most grateful to John Coombs of the Town Council for giving of his time and lending his expertise in this field. We also had to ensure that we had cleaners to clean the church before and between services, and also before services at St Peter's Ilmer. We are incredibly grateful to Joyce and Jimmy Finlay for their role in ensuring that our church buildings have been cleaned to provide a safe environment for those entering for worship.

Opening the church has also meant that we need to keep track and trace lists for each service / event in church and ensure that there are no shared books in circulation. Initially we operated a telephone /email booking service to ensure we didn't exceed the maximum numbers agreed for social distancing, but thanks to Pat Kerr, we have been able to use the Eventbrite online booking system on our website since Advent. Sincere thanks to Pat for working out how to use Eventbrite and loading all the services onto the system ready for people to book—we couldn't have done it without his expertise. Not being able to use the service books has meant that a new service sheet has been created weekly for the Sunday 9.15am service, the monthly service at St Peter's, and latterly the Thursday midweek Communion service. It has been interesting to get to grips with the Church of England website to download the required portions of liturgy specific to the season and my thanks to David Williams in his unfailing patience in guiding me through this process.

Thank you to everyone who has offered their help and support over the last year. In particular I know Jenny has been grateful for all the messages sent to her during her recent treatment. Jenny is an incredibly valuable member of our team, committed to her weekly tasks, and it has been a bonus to be able to include Jenny in our weekly Team meetings due to the power of Zoom. We very much look forward to working together again in person.

The Church Hall *Paul Seward*

Whilst pre-school has continued to operate, almost all other hall users have not been able to operate. This has placed a significant strain on the church hall finances which we hope will be eased as we come out of the lockdown stages. We are grateful to pre-school and to Joyce Finlay, our cleaner, for the conscientious and careful work they have done to preserve the COVID-safe environment within the hall. This has ensured that pre-school parents have felt that they and their children have been safe in the church hall during the pandemic.

The opportunity has been taken during the lockdowns and the pre-school holiday periods to continue upgrading the facilities within the hall. Almost all of the hall and all of the other rooms have been decorated. The kitchen has been completed and now contains not only modern facilities but an extensive amount of crockery and utensils that should allow the catering needs of the church to be met easily.

Floodlighting Sponsorship *Tony Kerwood*

During the last year all through the pandemic the floodlit spire of St Mary's church has shone as a beacon of hope over the town during those troubled times

Why not remember a birthday, wedding anniversary, the passing of a loved one, or just to say 'Hello' to a friend not seen for ages.

Sponsorship is fantastic value at **£5 per night**, unchanged since 1995. Cheques made payable to St. Mary's PCC. Sponsorship forms are available from the mobile stand in church. If you cannot find one just write to me direct: **Newlands, Summerleys Road, HP27 9QB**



Chapter House Cleaning *Kaye Lillycrop*

Use of the Chapter House stopped through most of 2020 due to the pandemic.

I provided a weekly cleaning of the disabled toilet for the Food Cupboard volunteers but this was then incorporated into the cleaning role undertaken by Joyce and Jimmy Finlay.

When regulations allowed Rose Williams's Bereavement Drop-in Group to resume monthly in the Chapter House, I provided necessary cleaning.

Prior to the pandemic we had a small dedicated team of six cleaners who I would sincerely like to thank but I think several will/should retire. As and when we are able to reopen the Chapter House we will need to have some new volunteers? Anyone available, I would be most grateful to hear from you.

This past year has been challenging for us, St Mary's & St Peters, due to the major disruption caused to us all by Covid. It does not mean though that nothing is done! It does mean that H&S is being managed in a way that keeps it visibly low key but deals with the items that assist us in having a safe environment. The major thing that we have done is the introduction and use of risk assessments for all our services and activities where permitted. There has been much time spent in ensuring compliance with statute requirements and our desire to operate a safe environment for us all.

So, during the past year we have reviewed and updated the main H&S policy documents, and these have been approved by the PCC. Ongoing maintenance works to our H&S equipment has been done including servicing of fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, fire detection and intruder alarms together with servicing of the gas central heating boilers and the Chapter House lift. Of course, we have implemented Personal Protection Equipment measures including hand sanitizer, cleaning of items between service and a marked route around the church. Never easy but thank you for playing your part.

We look forward to doing more in St Mary's in terms of activities and we make sure that the H&S documentation is reviewed and current for what we do. We are currently reviewing all that is underway to ensure that as and when we can reopen our doors fully, we will be well placed to do that with minimum fuss.

I would like to thank you all for keeping H&S in mind, it is not here to trip us up but to keep us safe!

Thank you to everyone for your patience and vigilance.



May our Lord Jesus Christ
Himself and God our Father,
who has loved us and given us
eternal encouragement and good
hope by grace, encourage your
hearts and strengthen you in
every good work and word.
2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Churchwardens' Closing Remarks Roger Arthey

My first year as churchwarden at St Mary's has been a very eventful time, and has presented challenges that none of us could have anticipated. However, throughout I have felt supported by God and the congregation of St Mary's. In particular I have appreciated the openness and kindness of David Williams and Pat Kerr, the patient mentoring of David Stephenson, the support of the assistant churchwardens, Peter and Pete, and the huge amount of work done by Kathryn and Jenny in the office. I have also to thank Bryan Matthew for his service as churchwarden, and for the helpful guidance he provided during the protracted handover.



The first lockdown delayed our 2020 APCM, so I was not elected until October, and admitted (the official term) in January this year. The Archdeacon's Visitation Service was held by Zoom, and was fraught with connectivity problems, but this did mean that I was able to chat with the other churchwardens being admitted for St Dunstan's, St John's Lacy Green and Holy Trinity, Bledlow.

Clearly a major concern for the church leadership during the pandemic has been when to close the church premises, and when and how to open them safely. We have had lots of guidance from government and the diocese, but we have had to interpret the information as it applies to our particular circumstances. We are grateful for your understanding of the complexity of these decisions, especially when they appear to be illogical or inconsistent!

During the time of lockdown, we have been able to broadcast our worship services on YouTube and Facebook due to the knowledge, skill and dedication of our audio-visual team. The successful appeal for funding of new, modern equipment, specified by our excellent Technical Advisory Group, means that the quality of the broadcasts is very high, and enhances the experience of worshippers. As well as providing worship to our existing congregations this has brought new people into the church family. Thank you to the clergy, lay ministers and everyone involved, who have had to learn how to manage the new skills required!

Since the beginning of May we have been able to operate a "hybrid" model of worship at both 9.15 and 11.15 services, continuing the contact with people who are unable to join us in person.

I am particularly pleased that the church has managed to maintain its services to the church and wider community through, for example, the pastoral visiting team and Operation Sheepfold, the Princes Risborough Food Cupboard based at St Mary's and our continued support of Nicci Maxwell in the Potter's Village in Uganda. These and our many other mission activities depend on the generous giving of time and money, for which we are so grateful.

The church owes a huge debt of gratitude to Michael Hoey, for the vast number of responsibilities that he undertakes in all aspects of the church's life and ministry. This year he has let us know that he will be stepping away from many of the more physically demanding jobs, many of which go un-noticed but without which the worship and ministry of the church would be severely compromised. The churchwardens are considering how to ensure that these tasks continue to get done. If you are interested in finding out more, please do contact us directly or through the parish office.



These are just a few of the many activities that I have appreciated or been involved in; it is not possible to include the appropriate recognition or thanks for all the work I see going on. But I encourage all those who dedicate their various talents and efforts to the mission in St Mary's and St Peter's, as I am encouraged by you.

A final thank you is due to David Williams for his leadership, enthusiasm and caring support for all the people involved in the church and outside, to Pat Kerr for his hard work, determination and enthusiasm in tackling situations which are very different from what he expected at the start of his curacy, and to all the ministry team, clergy and lay, for their commitment to bringing us God's message.

The metalworker encourages the goldsmith, and the one who smooths with the hammer spurs on the one who strikes the anvil. One says of the welding, "It is good." *Isaiah 41:7*