



2025 Annual Reports

to be presented at

THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

to be held on Tuesday 28th April 2026 at 7.15pm

In St Mary's Church



CONTENTS

WELCOME from the Team Rector, Revd Steve Benoy	3
WORSHIP	
Services at St Mary's and St Peter's	4
PRAYER	
Prayer Life at St Mary's, Prayer Ministry, Sunday Morning Prayer	5
SUPPORTING WORSHIP	
Refreshments, Welcomers , Flowers—Growing for God	6
AV Teams, Organ Music	7
Worship Band, Weddings, Baptism Ministry	8
Civic Services, Ukraine War Memorial Service, World Day of Prayer	9
DISCIPLESHIP	
Discipleship courses, Eco Church, Life Groups	10
MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES	
The Yurt Missional Community, Maker & Fixer Missional Community	11
CHILDREN'S & FAMILIES' MINISTRY	
Welcome to Lesley Tate, Kids' Church	12
Play Café, Messy Church, Pancake Party	13
Outreach to schools, Longwick School, Community Connections	14
St Mary's Sunday Youth Group, Lighthouse	15
LOCAL OUTREACH	
Princes Risborough Town Charity, One Can Trust, The Chilterns Pilgrimage Walk	16
The Princes Centre	17
MISSIONS & CHARITABLE GIVING	18
Safeguarding arrangements	19
PASTORAL CARE	
Pastoral Care, Bereavement Group, Ladies' Breakfasts, Men's Breakfasts,	20
Monthly Lunch Club, Sunday 'Tea for All'	21
PCC	
Review of Proceedings of PCC 2025-26, Stewardship / Giving Group	22
Churchwardens' Fabric & Property Report—St Mary's	23
St Peter's, Church Hall, Health & Safety	24
THE WIDER CHURCH	
Risborough Team of Anglican Churches, Churches Together, Aylesbury Deanery	25
Aylesbury Deanery Synod	26
COMMUNICATIONS	
Facebook Thoughts, Enews, Monthly Message, St Mary's Website, Data Protection	27
CHURCHWARDENS' CLOSING REMARKS	28
IN MEMORIAM	



Alex and Steve Benoy

Welcome from the Team Rector

As this document bears witness, St Mary's with St Peter's is a church family where plenty is going on, made possible by plenty of willing people.

If you are one of those, named or unnamed within this report, **thankyou** feels too small a word to express our gratitude but it is a most sincerely meant word.

If you are reading this report and not yet part of the church community, may you be encouraged that here in Princes Risborough are both beautiful church buildings which tell the story of the Christian faith through the centuries, as well as a dedicated church family eager to put faith into action in our times.

A little under a year ago, I was one of those who read the report from 2024, whilst considering whether to offer to be your new Rector. Just like that report, I see here an attractive and impressive variety to all the church is doing: in worship, developing faith, serving & being embedded in the wider community, with horizons beyond Risborough itself. Almost all of 2025 was spent in vacancy, and it is a tribute to the wardens & staff team, PCC & standing committee, as well as the many church members who have led or helped with different activities, that church life did not stand still but flourished. I am so blessed to have arrived to a church which, amongst others things, started a youth group and appointed a Children & Families minister whilst also sustaining established and effective groups.

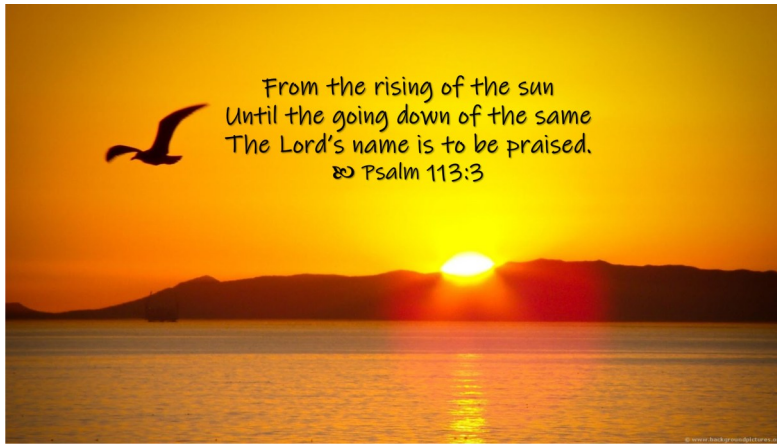
The coming year is likely to be one where we take stock, refresh our vision, values & priorities, consider our next steps and set course. A report such as this is so helpful to consider where we are seeing the "good fruit that lasts" and which Jesus so desires within his people (John 15:16). May it serve not only to encourage us, but to spur us on in prayer to be even more a people aiming to share the love of Christ with all.

Every continued blessing

Steve

*Bishop Dave Bull officiating at Steve's Licensing Service
Wednesday 26 November 2025*





Worship at St Mary's

The Revd Andrew Walmsley

During the interregnum the pattern of worship continued as usual and we are very grateful for the support of the Associate and Retired Clergy and LLMs across the team who preached and assisted with services.

Weeks of Prayer

As the church moved into interregnum, we felt it was important to pray, and so ran two weeks of prayer during the year to allow everyone an opportunity to spend time praying with God in community. The first week of prayer occurred during the second week of February, and a good mix of people from across the church were in attendance. We ran three sessions during the day: morning, midday, and evening. The week ran from Monday to Saturday, and a range of people, both clergy and laity led the sessions. The second week of prayer ran in a similar fashion during June and linked into Thy Kingdom Come. Both weeks offered a range of prayer sessions, from morning and evening prayer to space for reflection. The feedback from those attending was positive, as it allowed people space to come before God.

Wednesday Midweek Communion Service

Peter Cline

This service clearly meets a need and is regularly well attended and appreciated as a valuable part of St Mary's outreach to those in the community who are unable to attend our normal Sunday services. It is a simple said Communion service followed by coffee in the Chapter House.

Worship at St Peter's

Tony Eccleston

Monthly services have continued in the lovely old church at the centre of Ilmer. Our services are usually held on the third Sunday of the month, at 6 pm in the summer and 3pm in the winter. Wherever possible they have been aligned with major festivals or occasions, like Christmas, Easter, Harvest and Remembrance Sunday. We have also had an extra service in December to provide a Christmas carol service.



St Peter's has a long history. Odo, William the Conqueror's half-brother apparently used it as a hunting chapel. But Ilmer village has shrunk in size over the years and now has only about 50 inhabitants, few of whom ever come to services or contribute to its upkeep. Instead, most people in the small congregation come from Longwick because they like the traditional style and fellowship that Ilmer provides. Our Sexton does live in the village and she and a loyal team of volunteers from Longwick prepare the church for our services.

A major challenge ahead will be the maintenance of the building with the roof particularly in need of restoration. The estimated cost is well beyond the means of the congregation and will need to be the focus of attention in the next few years.



Prayer Life at St Mary's

Peter Cline

Prayer is at the centre of all we do and, hopefully, our various Prayer activities have been effective in supporting those in need. 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 members of the Church family 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 continued meeting every Wednesday morning at 9:00 am via Zoom. Attendance has been consistent, but we would always welcome new faces.

We start with a Bible reading and in the past year we have been reading some of Paul's letters and have read some season specific passages during Advent and Lent. We circulate a weekly 'thought' expanding on the passage to be read on the preceding Tuesday to those who regularly attend. After reading the passage, 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.

Prayer Ministry

Averil Stephenson, LLM Emerita

Prayer Ministry has been offered at the end of the St. Mary's 11.15 am service each week, apart from Christmas Day and Easter Sunday, with usually 2 members of the team on rota available to pray with individual members of the congregation for their personal situations. There are currently 8 members of the team: Claire Barbary, Carole Edwards, Chris McGough, Ronel Murray, Averil Stephenson, David Stephenson, Chris Stoddard and Liz Stoddard who have been trained in appropriate ways of giving this prayer and I am so grateful for our partnership together in this service. We welcomed Carole and Chris as new members this past year. It is such a privilege to pray for the congregation, and we usually have at least 2-3 who come up each week. Our values are always to respect the person's safety and dignity, to respect their confidentiality, to pray reflecting the love of Jesus Christ for them and welcoming the power and gifting of His Holy Spirit.

In addition, when requested, we have been available to pray in pairs for individuals in their homes as has happened a couple of times this year.

We should love to welcome more people to the team. Please contact Averil Stephenson: e mail: averilstephenson49@gmail.com or in person if you would be interested in learning more.

Sunday Morning Prayer before the 11.15am service: 10.45 - 11 am

Averil Stephenson

Several of us have continued to pray silently, waiting on The Lord, before the 11.15 am service; writing down any "words" or "pictures" that are received to pass on to the Service Leader who shares them with the Congregation as they feel led. It has been encouraging to meet in this way. We also pray for the service as a whole. Others who so wish would be very welcome to join us for these times.

Supporting our Worship Services

Refreshments

Jane Cotton

The coffee bar in church provides a good place for fellowship and refreshments after the 9.30 service and before the 11.15 service, including opportunity for the congregations to mingle.

We have some new volunteers for 11.15 with 13 now on the rota. By contrast we rely now on 6 faithful volunteers at 9.30am. We were all saddened by the death of Janet Edwards who had been a mainstay of the 9.30 rota and a good friend to us all. More volunteers always welcome. It's a great way to get to know more people and hone your washing up skills.

Welcomers in Church

David Stephenson

The welcome teams at our services are a most important part of the ministry at St Mary's, as they are in the front line of giving people a warm welcome to our services, in the same way as we would in our own homes.

Both our teams are dedicated to welcoming people to our services and seeking to make them relaxed and aware of everything that they need to know. The teams also look out for newcomers and we have a welcome leaflet to give to people, and a card for them to make contact with the church. These will enable them to go onto the website for St Marys Church Princes Risborough or contact the office (01844 273300) for more information.

At present we have 7 members on the team at 9.30am and 8 members on the team at 11.15 and we would really appreciate new members joining us. If you are interested please contact either Jenny in the office (9.30am service) or David Stephenson (11.15am) on davidstephenson945@gmail.com. Thank you so much to our current teams.

Flowers in Church—Growing for God

Jacquie Biddlecombe

It is hard to believe that another year has passed and that a full cycle of seasons has delighted and amazed us with their infinite beauty and diversity. We have completed another year of providing floral displays in our church with only seasonal, sustainable and locally grown flowers and foliage, and no money has been spent. My only concern, moving forward, is the resilience of the process. My previous little team has really dwindled to just me, and occasional help from others, but this is not sustainable and I really need some help. Should I be run over by a bus, how will things continue? None of us are irreplaceable, but succession planning is really important.

I know lots of you are trying to grow cutting flowers to use in the arrangements, and that is wonderful, and a joy to see the hard work in your garden being presented to God in this way. We had a really lovely session making Christmas wreaths which were used to decorate the church for Christmas. Seventeen wreaths were made with help and guidance from Billy Stott, and you all showed that those creative gifts are not far from the surface!

Please consider whether you might be able to help with creating our floral displays, the more the merrier. It is really simple, just let the leaves and flowers do the talking and reflect the beauty of the season. Guidance and support will be provided, you will not be on your own, and you will get to know and work with others from our congregation that you may not already know.

May I also encourage the gardeners amongst you to contact me if you have anything sprouting in your garden, and we can display your lovely offerings as a gift to God. Consider growing additional bulbs and dahlias, and things that flower later in the year.

I will gladly continue to provide decorative arrangements in church, and detail the flowers used on the little chalk boards for those who are interested, but, moving forward, please consider whether you can get involved, it is not difficult.

Thank you to all of you who have provided flowers and foliage, foraged for wild flowers and allowed me to carry out some "judicious" pruning in your gardens, I couldn't do it without you.

In the meantime, I will take extra care when crossing the road!



Update from the AV Teams

Steve Upton, Neill Moore & Jim Cadwallader

There are two aspects to the AV support at the 9:30 service: providing microphones to amplify the priest and the readers for the congregation in church; and enabling many people who are not able to get to the church in person to watch and hear the service on their computer, smart phone or TV.

Thank you to the dedicated group who have enabled this to happen. It takes two of us to do the AV for the 9:30 service, one on sound and one on the cameras. We have 8 volunteers and would welcome a few more. If you're interested please speak to Jim: no prior knowledge required!

For the 11:15 services, and other contemporary events, the provision of AV can be slightly more complex as we normally show presentation material on the screens, and in addition to microphones for speakers we mix sound for the music group.

We have a similar group of 6-8 volunteers, half of whom focus on the preparation and presentation of video material and the other half on sound. The team does get a bit stretched, particularly during holiday periods, so we are always ready to welcome and train new team members with a willingness to learn and serve "from the back". If you are interested please speak to Steve or Neill.

For both teams, we have benefitted enormously with support from the younger members of our church family, and as such it has been a good year. Plus, the equipment we are working with, despite its age, continues to perform well. We must not forget, however, that the larger part of our installed AV System, put in when the church was remodelled, is now nearly 15+ years old, which is a significant age for technical equipment. In addition, in the coming year the AV Computer in the AV Desk will need to be renewed on account of Microsoft support for Windows 10 finally coming to an end. More thought required!

Organ music in traditional services

Stuart King

I had an excellent response to my request to the choirs in the Risborough team to make Steve's induction service on 26th November a joyful occasion. It was very rewarding to have such a strong choir to lead the hymns and perform the anthem. Over thirty singers responded to my invitation and Jeff Stewart from Bledlow kindly agreed to conduct.

For our Lessons and Carols service on 21st December, Jacquie Biddlecombe and I managed to recruit and rehearse fifteen singers which helped to create a festive occasion at Christmas. Our thanks to all who gave their time and talents, especially Ann Palmer for rallying the troops, and to all who gave their time and talents to sing at the service but also for attending all the rehearsals beforehand.

In 2025 I started writing Organ Notes each week which Jenny in the office kindly copies onto the back of the Newsletter. This gives a short summary and the thought process behind the organ pieces I play before, during and after the 09.30 service. I have had a number of very positive comments from members of the congregation, so I am pleased that my weekly thoughts are useful.

Looking ahead, Jacquie and I would like to explore the possibility of having a small group of singers to lead our 09.30 Sunday worship once a month. We have hymn books, boxes of anthems, adequate seating. We just lack voices. If you feel called to praise the Lord in choral song, please talk to Jacquie or me.

The view from the organ bench is, sadly, compromised by a slowly decaying instrument. The situation is not untypical for many parish organs across England. For many years, I have been asking for funds to do urgent repairs to the organ. We are blessed for having such a robust instrument, but it is more than sixty years since it was moved from High Wycombe and despite repeated annual requests for funds, there seems to be no money to take care of the most expensive piece of furniture in church. I have been given an assurance that the work is on the 'to do' list so I look forward to the work reaching the top of the list in the not too distant future.

Contact Stuart at: slhk1950@hotmail.com.

Worship Band

Tim Horton

Over this last year there has been a growing sense of greater depth in our sung worship. And with more engagement from all generations too! Whilst this has been a theme for the last few years, there's definitely something stirring for us. I pray that God will continue to speak to us and through us as we bring our songs of worship at St Mary's.

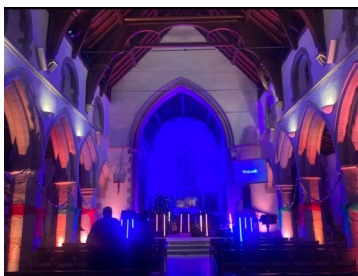
We have been blessed with some fantastic musicians who help to lead our sung worship at the 11:15 service. I would like to offer a heart-felt THANK YOU to everyone who offers their time and abilities to serve us in our music ministry!

It's been wonderful to see some of the young people get involved in the band. A great testimony to the importance of the community that meets on a Sunday evening.

We are always on the lookout for more people to help us in our musical worship. If you play an instrument or sing, and would like to get involved, do please have a chat with me or one of the worship leaders about how you can get involved.



Once a term, we have the Sunday evening Unplugged service, which lasts around an hour and a quarter. The songs and short message are focused on a theme and aim to help us to encounter God and respond to him through extended times of sung-worship and prayer. This unstructured time provides the space we cannot typically experience in our morning services.



As with the last few years, we have held our Contemporary Carol service, with 2025's service moving from midweek to a Sunday evening. I've said before that this is one of my favourite services of the year, where we blend well-known carols with modern arrangements. And transform the church building with wonderful lighting. It's a great opportunity to invite friends and neighbours to, as we proclaim the good news of the new-born King!

A lot goes on behind the scenes with both the music and technical elements, so it's another THANK YOU from me to all who make that celebration service what it is.

Finally, my prayer for St Mary's for this coming year comes from Psalm 149:1, may we:

"Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people."

Weddings

Jenny King

Thank you to all those who help with these services in their own free time—Welcomers, Organist and AV volunteers all play their part in ensuring these weddings run smoothly. We just had two weddings at St Mary's this year. Sadly, there seems to be a growing trend to have weddings at wedding venues rather than in church. However, we welcome anyone who is considering getting married and more information is available on the website.

Baptism Ministry

Jenny King

We have had 5 infant Baptisms and 1 adult baptism in the period April 2025 to April 2026, mostly within the 11.15am service but also at the 9.30am service. Some families brought their child for baptism who have become known to us through attending Play Café sessions. We thank God that we are building relationships with families through our outreach here and at Messy Church. New families are invited to attend a Baptism Preparation session with Steve or Andrew where the theology, as well as the practice, of Baptism is explained.

Civic Services at St Mary's Church

St Mary's continues to be a central gathering place for civic remembrance and community reflection, bringing together people from all walks of life to mark significant occasions. On 27th April 2025, we hosted the **St George's Day Service**, where Scouts, Cubs, and Beavers renewed their promises. They also brought in donations for the One Can Food Bank.

This occasion highlighted the church's role in supporting young people in their commitment to service, leadership, and community values.

It was the turn of Princes **Risborough Young Farmers** to organise the district Harvest Festival service which they chose to hold here in October. Andrew led over a hundred young folk as they joined in traditional harvest hymns and readings.

Later in the year, on 9th November 2025 the **Remembrance Service** was held, led by The Revd Andrew Walmsley, with the sermon preached by Tony Eccleston, LLM. The service was attended by a full congregation, including local councillors, representatives from the armed forces, uniformed organisations, and community leaders.

A poem 'The Gift of India' by Sarojini Naidu written in 1917 was read by Kritika Katla, aged 16, a member of the Hindu community from Aylesbury High School. The Act of Commitment was led by Greg Smith, MP, before the congregation processed to the Market Square for the Civic Act of Remembrance, which was led by Alan Turner and Andrew. This service was a powerful moment of reflection, unity, and gratitude, demonstrating the significance of remembrance in our local community.

Most recently, on 22nd February 2025, St Mary's hosted a **Special Service for Ukraine**, a deeply moving occasion led by the Revd Tony Bundock. This service provided a space for the Ukrainian community, alongside local residents, to share in readings, songs, and prayers. The Ukrainian families now living here warmly expressed their gratitude to their host families, the 'Ukraine to Chilterns' charity and all who had helped in any way to make them feel welcome. The choir of ladies and children singing the Ukrainian national anthem was particularly moving. Afterwards everyone was invited to a wonderful supper of Ukrainian food in the Church Hall.



What makes these occasions truly special is the way the wider community, including local churches, institutions, and charities, comes together in support. St Mary's is privileged to be a place where civic, interfaith, and ecumenical partnerships flourish, ensuring that these services remain meaningful, well-attended, and deeply valued. The presence of representatives from different faith groups, schools, uniformed organisations, and local government demonstrates the strength of community spirit and the shared commitment to honouring the past, celebrating service, and fostering hope for the future.

World Day of Prayer, 5th March 2026

Kathryn Trout



Thank you to June Brazier and the organising team from across our churches for this year's service which was hosted by St John's. Biddy Gilman represented St Mary's and took part in some of the readings. The service was created by the ladies of Nigeria with the theme: 'I will give you rest, come (Matthew 11: 28-30. The service shared the stories of four Nigerian women who inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. As we trust in God, our Burden Bearer, we become one body in Christ, receiving and bringing rest

to the world. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed a chat with members from our different churches over a bountiful provision of coffee and cake.

World Day of Prayer is celebrating its Centennial in 2027 with the theme "United in Prayer for Justice and Peace." St Mary's is delighted to host this special service next year. If you are interested in being involved please speak to Biddy or contact the office.

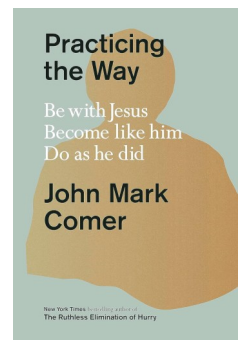


The Revd Andrew Walmsley

Discipleship played an important part in the life of St Mary's last year with a number of different initiatives throughout the year. The following will give you a flavour of what we did.

Discipleship Courses

During 2025 we ran just one course as we were in an interregnum. We continued with some work on the spiritual disciplines following on from the Practicing the Way course that we had run the previous year. The mini course we did was a study of the spiritual discipline of Sabbath. This practice taught us all how to stop, rest, delight, and worship. It was a great introduction to how to slow down and discover the rhythm of rest, rediscovering this important gift that God gave to us.



Eco Church

Last August, a group of enthusiastic volunteers gathered to start the Eco Church Award project with A Rocha. The group comprises about 12 people from across St Mary's who have an interest in the environment. Although the aim is to achieve a bronze award, the overall goal is to help us change our habits and lifestyle so that we are living more in tune with the world that God created. In the latter part of 2025, the group aimed to complete the surveys on five areas of the award: Buildings and Energy; Land and Nature; Teaching and Worship; Lifestyle; and Community Engagement. Once the surveys had been completed we could assess where we were and what we needed to do. Surprisingly, the work people have done on our buildings over the years means we already meet a good standard for that part of the award. More work on our heating system is currently being investigated by Roger as part of the longer-term heating solution at St Mary's. Other areas of the award will take some time to achieve as we need to work through the key goals for each area. Look out for information from the group over the coming months.



Liz Stoddard & Claire Barbary

Beyond the remit of our varied Sunday services, Life Groups at St Mary's play a vital part in fostering connection and belonging for both individuals, families and our local community. In 2025 twenty-three groups were broadly identified under our category

of Life Groups. These included social, missional and interest groups as well as the more traditional Bible Study, Prayer and Discipleship groups. Encouragingly we gained our twenty-fourth group recently: the Wednesday afternoon Craft Group Coordinated by Susan Seward (held bi-monthly in St Mary's Hall). Since start up last year our Teenager's Youth Group has steadily and wonderfully grown. It sprang up from small beginnings as Alex and Neil identified an area of need, stepping up themselves to make it happen.

Over the next year we would love to have more stories to share about new Life-groups starting up. They serve a huge variety of needs within our Church and are like micro communities for connection, growth and faith. Maybe you have a particular interest and could host a group or maybe help to lead one. If so, we would love to hear from you, especially as there is renewed interest from several newcomers who would like to join a Life Group (especially the more traditional style home groups). If you would like to know more about joining or helping with Life Groups do contact either myself, Claire Barbary or the Church office. We would love to hear from you.



The Yurt Community

The Yurt Missional Community meets weekly in the Yurt at Church Farm at 7:30pm on a Wednesday evening. Our evening starts with refreshments at 7:30pm and worship at 7:45pm before the main activity of the evening. We try and conclude the evening discussions closing at 9pm.

Over the last 12 month we have enjoyed a range of activities. Following a course on the book of Acts we started another called 'Christian Disciplines'. This covers the foundational disciplines of Christian Life such as 'Quiet Time', prayer, worship and Bible study and other crucial disciplines such as evangelism, giving and social justice. These topics provoke amazing conversations and insights.

During Lent we are following the Lent course from 24/7 Prayer, focusing on the example and inspiration of the Desert Fathers and Mothers.

In addition, we try and have regular social gatherings (generally involving food).

The Yurt provides opportunities for great community, pastoral support and spiritual growth. New members and visitors are always welcome and we have enjoyed a couple of visits from Nicola Neal, Moses and Emma from Every Life through the year. We thank God for the blessing of this group and pray for the future development and growth.

Carole Edwards, Hugh & Lizzie Thomas-Davies



Monday and Friday Prayer Group at the Yurt

A number of people meet for prayer in the Yurt at Church Farm on Mondays and Fridays at 7:30am for a 30 minute prayer session. The format is generally to use the Lectio 365 app for the day, the participants reading it between them. Each session incorporates scripture, reflection and prayer and our sessions also include a time of open prayer. The number of participants varies, but is generally 3-8 people.

These sessions are always a blessing and we would gladly welcome anyone who feels called to join us for either or both sessions.

Maker & Fixer

We had our second year of Maker and Fixer. We meet at Culverton Farm, Wycombe Road, Princes Risborough (the same location as the Repair Barn). The format of each session is broadly similar, opening with a prayer, sometimes in Ukrainian/Russian as well as English (depending on who from the Ukrainian community is attending), then have a short Bible reading and reflection followed by a number of activities linked to the theme. These could involve the use of a sewing machine, wood working equipment or other tools depending on the activity.

Towards the end of the session, we gather together to show each other what we have made/repaired before a closing prayer and some food and drink.

Examples of some of the things we have made are: bird boxes, planters, small wooden boats, handwarmers, pegbags, signposts and cards. We try to ensure that we have a fun afternoon as well as an opportunity for learning new skills and working together. Examples of new skills are woodworking, upholstery and sewing skills, including sewing machine care. Also the Maker & Fixer team have supported the Soapbox Challenge at Kop Hill Climb as well as entering a number of teams.

Since January 2026, we are meeting on the 2nd Sunday of each month from 3-5pm. All are welcome



Welcome to our Children's & Families Minister, Revd Lesley Tate



Our Children and Families Minister, Lesley Tate, joined us in January and is overseeing the ministry to children and families within the church as well as outreach to children and families within the community. Lesley would like to thank the Children and Families team for their passionate and faithful commitment to this ministry, with special thanks to Stella Upton for the help and support she has given Lesley as she has settled into her new role.

The reports in this section were compiled by Lesley, Stella and Andrew

Kids church on Sunday morning 11.15am Live @ St Mary's service

Kids Church is going well. It has a strong foundation of regular attendees and is beginning to welcome new children. We are now able to offer both a 3–5s group and a 5–11s group, complemented by our 11+ youth group, which meets on Sunday evenings.

The team is nurturing the spiritual life of Kids Church in a variety of ways. We have introduced weekly sung worship using YouTube videos to help develop the children's experience of worshipping together. This connects well with the new pattern at the 11:15am service, where two worship songs are sung at the beginning, including one familiar to the children. Together, these developments seem to be helping the children grow in their enjoyment of sung worship. We are also creating space for them to respond to God's presence and to pray in creative ways.

At the start of each session, both age groups come together for an icebreaker and sung worship, helping to build a sense of being one church and one community. There is a real desire for this to flourish, and while some weeks go more smoothly than others, it is a positive step forward.

We are also exploring ways for older children to begin mentoring the younger ones.

Please pray for wisdom for the team as we take time soon to reflect on these developments and the wider life of Kids Church.

Thank you to the wonderful team who support this work, serving with creativity and sensitivity to help every child find their place and encounter Jesus—their friend and King—who loves them completely.

St Mary's Play Café

Play Café is a relaxed and welcoming morning that brings together soft play, toys, crafts, colouring, playdough, singing, snacks, and story time—all in one.

We meet in the church every Tuesday during term time from 9:30am, welcoming babies, toddlers, and their parents, grandparents, carers, and childminders. Each week, around 40 children (from newborn to age 4) attend with their carers.

At around 10:30am, we pause for coffee, cake, and snack time, before finishing the morning with a story and singing together. And, by very popular demand, we always include a singalong to *My Lighthouse*.

Most weeks, when we open the doors at 9:30am, there is already a queue, and we often have to put up the “Sorry, we are full” sign.

Our team of volunteer helpers really value the time they spend with the adults and children who attend, and from the feedback we receive each week, that feeling is clearly mutual. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming space where people can chat, relax, build friendships, and where children can play and explore.

Prayer Point: please pray for more helpers. If you're able to make coffee, chat with parents and carers, or support play and craft activities with the children, we would love to have you join the team.

It's also been encouraging to see that some families have had their children baptised, and others are now attending Messy Church.

Messy Church

There is much to celebrate about Messy Church. For many families, it is their main point of contact with church, and they are warmly welcomed through games, crafts, activities, storytelling, worship, and a shared meal. Each session follows a theme, usually linked to the church seasons—Harvest, Christingle, New Year, and Easter—culminating in a summer BBQ in July.

At the same time, there are some questions around sustainability, as the team has become smaller and is beginning to feel stretched. With this in mind, Lesley and Steve met with the team to reflect together—celebrating the strengths of Messy Church and all that has been achieved so far.

A key question emerged from that conversation: what is the purpose of Messy Church? Is it primarily an outreach event, or an accessible service for families?

As a next step, we are trialling a slightly different style of service on Good Friday, which has worked well in a previous context, to help us discern the future direction of Messy Church. The team will meet again in April to review this service and consider the next steps.

Messy Church has been supported by a dedicated team of helpers who design and lead the crafts and activities, as well as prepare and serve the food.

Events and Outreach

The Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday was a joyful and well-attended family event, creating a great opportunity for fun, hospitality and connection.



Outreach to Schools

St Mary's also hosted 30 Year 6 children from Princes Risborough Primary School at Easter and Christmas in two events run by Wycombe Youth for Christ. At Easter the children joined in Easter Eggs-plained, where they found out about what Easter is really all about, retelling the story of Easter, and why this is important for Christians.

Christmas Unwrapped was the event that helped the class to understand the true meaning of the Christmas Story. Through fun, games and crafts, the children could learn a bit more about who Jesus was and what the season means for Christians. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped to make these two events run smoothly.

If you would like to find out more about the work that WYFC does, or if you would like to get involved, then visit their website here:

<https://www.wycombeyfc.org.uk/get-involved/>



Longwick Church of England Combined School



INSPIRING A LOVE OF LEARNING - is the Longwick school motto

Core values - RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, PERSEVERANCE and KINDNESS

These values help the children grow into confident, resilient individuals who understand the importance of caring for others and to act with integrity.

Once David Williams left, Andrew Walmsley took on the role of foundation governor at Longwick C of E Combined school, alongside Elaine Needham. The school had a challenging year during 2025 as the previous head resigned and the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust placed a temporary head in the school to help the school as they transitioned to a new Headteacher.

In September Ms. Laura Collinson was appointed as the new Headteacher. St Mary's has continued to work with Longwick School, especially taking assemblies every week. We have also been able to host Longwick during the Autumn and Winter terms for their Harvest festival and Christmas service. It was a joy to see children from each year group using the church to work, practise and then perform for their parents at these events.

The Head, Laura Collinson values the team's support, and Steve and Lesley have met with her to begin conversations about how we can further support the children, families, and staff at the school. It will be encouraging to see how this relationship develops.

Community Connections

Lesley has begun building connections with local organisations that support children and families across the Risborough area. Eleanor McGregor, drawing on her many years of experience in this field, has been representing St Mary's at networking meetings hosted by the Family Hub at Princes Risborough School. She invited Lesley to join the network, which is already proving to be an invaluable connection—offering a helpful starting point for relationship-building and exploring opportunities for partnership.



St Mary's Sunday Youth Group

It's not just pancakes, pizzas and popcorn but they do feature quite often on a Sunday evening. A team of 5 adults and 2 junior leaders have led a term time group of about 8 to 12 young people through some amazing and quite open discussions. Amongst many subjects, we have discussed and pondered things such as the "I am" statements of Jesus and "what's the value of money?"



The weekly format includes games (outside in the Summer) , food, video clips, a discussion part and a reflection and then games again.

We have a new initiative: a budding worship band, so "watch this space", as we hope to lead a service again, in the near future.

Lighthouse 2025

Lighthouse is the holiday club for children run by Christians from local churches working together with people in the community. We are passionate about seeing children from all walks of life and abilities encountering God in a fun-filled week with teaching, sport, craft, performing arts and music.

The Theme for 2025 was 'Found' and the memory verse was: 'I love you people with a love that will last forever. I became your friend because of your love and kindness.' Jeremiah 31:3



www.lighthousecentral.org

Each day a different bible story was covered including the parable of the lost sheep, Daniel in the Lion's den and the Good Samaritan. Paul Douglass took on the role of leading the children in sports activities and many of the St Mary's children's team took active roles in leading age groups and the Little Lighthouse tent (0-4 yrs).

443 children attended with a further 60 coming along to Little Lighthouse looked after by 152 volunteers. Thank you to all who helped or donated in any way.



Neil Dyson and Paul Douglass

Singing in the Big Top



Lighthouse 2026 will run from **Monday 27th July to Friday 31st July**—volunteer registration now open!
<https://app.signmeup.org.uk/lighthouse-princes-risborough/43>



An important aspect of our outreach as a Church is that to our local community as we seek to live out Jesus' call to Love God and our neighbour. Over the past year, we have done this in a number of ways:

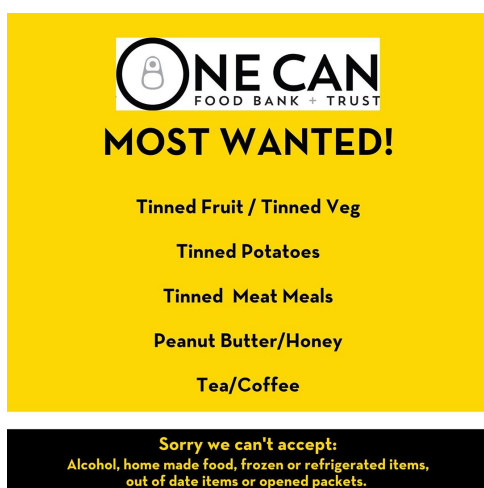
Princes Risborough Town Charity

Sue Coombs

This local charity, funded through rental income from legacy land, including gardening allotments, plays a crucial role in providing assistance to those in need. Over the past year, the charity has delivered over 90 Christmas hampers to families across the area and partnered with St Mary's Church and The Crew Café to provide hot meals through the café coupon scheme. The Revd Steve Benoy is now a Trustee of the Charity.

One Can Trust

Rupert Aries



Donations to One Can (Our local food trust) continue to be needed and there are collection bins outside St Mary's Chapter House, at Tesco and at the Co-op. Please ensure your donations go into the One Can cage at Tesco as donations to the larger cage food donations go outside the area.

Typically, there are 5-6 local families each week who need support from One Can, who make the deliveries from their base in High Wycombe. Volunteers in our community & from St Mary's help out with the quarterly food drives at Tesco.

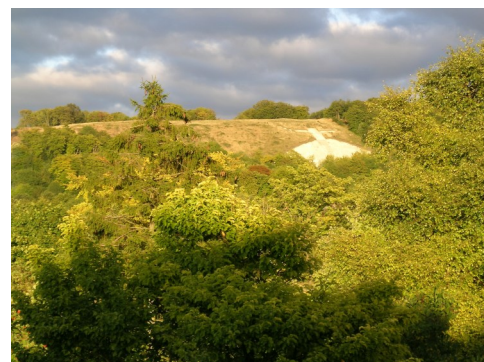
Thank you to all those who donate throughout the year. Alongside is the list of items most needed now.

Chilterns Pilgrimage Walk

Peter Dixon

About a dozen of us set off from St Mary's after a short blessing from Andrew. At the top of the cross on Whiteleaf Hill we had a short service and prayer led by Stephen Cotton before heading down to Monks Risborough where we were joined by a few more pilgrims. Our coffee stop at Owlswick chapel was most welcome, a big thankyou to Jane Rogers for providing the refreshments. We continued via Longwick to Bledlow for lunch at the Lions of Bledlow, where we were joined by even more pilgrims. From there it was a short walk to The Lyde Garden for a time of reflection where streams of living water flowed. Onwards to Horsenden for another short talk and prayer before heading back to St Mary's for tea and cake.

We now have a date for **2026, Saturday 8th August** when we will repeat the pilgrimage walk. All are welcome for all or part of the 10-mile route.





THE PRINCES CENTRE[®]

AWARD WINNING DAYCARE

Maggie Wooster-Keyte writes: the last twelve months have seen a number of changes for the Princes Centre.



Mags West

Our General Manager Kim Challinor retired after many years of working hard to get the Centre into its current healthy position. This led to Mags West, who was our manager in Bourne End, becoming the new Day Centre Manager for Risborough and Marina Glen has become Day Centre Manager for Bourne End.

Our Finance Officer Julia Spittles has taken on a new expanded role as Business Manager, relieving our chairman of some of his work. There have also been staff upgrades.

We were pleased that our chairman Matt Walsh rejoined the local Town Council last year and thrilled to hear that he was voted Mayor. We know that he will work as hard for the town as he has for our Princes Centre.



Sue, our longest serving member of staff, who was responsible for the successful formation of the Jingers choir and the concerts held in St Marys, also moved on to other activities. We are all grateful for all she has done and wish her well in the future. The Jingers concerts are continuing but in a different format.

The trustees of the Princes Centre continue to work hard on behalf of the community to run the centres, both here and in Bourne End, to the highest standard possible. Each of the trustees bring their own talents and concentrate on specific areas such as quality of care, health and safety, property maintenance, finance, web site management, future growth, fund raising, governance etc. If anyone has a special talent which would be useful to the Centre, they would be welcome to apply to become a trustee as there may be some retirements this year.

The staff also put a lot of effort into their work trying to make everything perfect for our clients. A huge variety of activities, indoors and outside is provided for them to enjoy, and trips are provided for those who are able to enjoy them. We also provide regular entertainment which is very popular.



The trustees wish to sincerely thank all at St Mary's for all the continuous support they have received which has helped them to achieve so much as custodians of the buildings and as directors of the business of providing day care for all the vulnerable people in our community.



Mission and Charitable Giving

Kaye Lillycrop

St Mary's has a strong tradition of supporting charities; local, national and international. Currently we give 10% of our budget to missions and charities. We regularly welcome charities to speak at our services and those which are Christian based are particularly grateful as they rely on having supporting churches. We prioritise mission charities and also aim to include charities in our local community (eg The Princes Centre) and smaller charities where we have links (eg Project Possible).

Each September, based on your nominations, the PCC choose a charity to receive financial support for three years (major award). Six other charities are given a one-off grant (minor award).

2025 Major Awards **"Champion" for this charity*

CMS South Sudan - Nicci Maxwell

St Paul's Church & Bryansford, N.Ireland, The Revd Pat Kerr

The Children's Society

2025(Elaine Needham)*

2024 (David Williams)*

2023 (Helen Lidington)*

2025 Minor Awards

Every Life (Chris McGough)*

Hamlin Fistula U.K. (Kaye Lillycrop)*

BRF Ministries (Andrew Walmsley)*

Novo UK—David James in East London (Sue Hughes)*

Project Possible (Peter Cline)*

The Princes Centre (Maggie Wooster Keyte)*

We also support our chosen charities through:

- prayer
- links via Life groups
- direct giving
- inviting speakers from the charities to visit
- groups going out from St Mary's to see the charities at work
- knitters in the local community who provide blankets for women and babies in Ethiopia (Hamlin Fistula)

During 2025 Nicci Maxwell, our CMS mission partner, based in Juba, South Sudan visited us during her home leave. We had a very enjoyable and informative talk from Nicci hearing how difficult life is for those in the refugee camp she visits, the local people and indeed Nicci herself!

We also had visiting speakers come to our services : Richard Fisher from BRF, Dave Pepper from Project Possible and Greg Morris from Hamlin Fistula.

Many of the charities provide newsletters which are available in church; eg Ignite is about Project Possible. As well as the regular CMS updates about our mission partner Nicci Maxwell in South Sudan, Nicci herself writes a regular blog which many people follow (niccimaxwell.wordpress.com).

Please 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 on our website and in church.

Kaye delivered all these bags of knitted blankets to Hamlin Fistula in Birmingham. An impressive collection from all our knitters. Thank you to all who knitted, donated or helped in any way.





A Safer Church for All - Safeguarding Arrangements 2025-6

Tony Eccleston

Introduction: Policies and Procedures

Good governance and management in safeguarding involve having policies and procedures that are implemented, regularly reviewed, adaptable to change, compliant with legislation, and publicly accessible. The Safeguarding Policy for the parish follows the national model and was reviewed and approved in February 2026.

The PCC has sought to ensure that these policies and procedures are communicated to all staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and partners. Copies have been posted on the church website and notice boards. The information on the church website has also been kept up to date.

Safeguarding is reviewed every month by the Rector and safeguarding team and is on every PCC agenda. We have begun to look at the use of social media in church and this will continue through 2026.

We also continue to check that all group leaders who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults have valid clearances from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Safeguarding Training

This remains one of the main focuses of our safeguarding work. All those undertaking a role on behalf of the Church are encouraged to complete the appropriate online safeguarding training even if they are not on the PCC or working with children or vulnerable adults. All members of the PCC and anyone working with children or vulnerable adults **must** complete at least the Basic Awareness and the Foundation Course.

The majority of church office holders and helpers have now completed the required training and the safeguarding team is monitoring progress in getting everyone trained to the required level. In the last year we have also been recommending more strongly that all PCC members and people working with children, young people and vulnerable adults undertake the training on Awareness of Domestic Abuse.

Disclosures or complaints

In the last year there has been only one disclosure of concern about children and young people, and one new concern involving a vulnerable adult. A small number of people with previous involvement in abuse are being monitored in accordance with diocesan procedures.

The Parish Safeguarding Action Plan

To pull all this together the PCC has continued to use a database provided by the Diocese to monitor our progress in implementing our policies and procedures and getting people checked and trained. This is the basis of our annual plan.

Safeguarding Contact Details

These can be found on the blue posters situated in the porch, the Children's & Families' noticeboard behind the font and in the meeting room of the Chapter House. Church Incident Report Forms are in the Vestry.

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Tony Eccleston (safeguarding@stmarysrisborough.org.uk)

Safeguarding Administrator: Jenny King





Pastoral Care

The Bereavement Drop-in

The Revd Rose Williams

Bereavement Drop In meets on the second Monday of every month at 3pm in the Chapter House at St Mary's Church. Strictly speaking this is not a church group, because it is open to those of any faith or no faith at all. What unites us is our common experience of grief and loss. Those who come tell their stories, offer support and advice to one another and laugh and cry together. Over the years 95 people have come and gone from the group although our usual attendance is around 6 people each time. Many return when times are difficult and all are welcome.

Contact Rose Williams via the Parish Office for further details.

Ladies' Breakfasts

The Revd Rose Williams

Ladies Breakfast meets in St Mary's Church Hall on the first Saturday every two months from January to November (except September when we meet on the last Saturday in August.) Breakfast starts at 9am with porridge, bacon rolls, fruit, muesli and a selection of pastries. All ladies and their friends are welcome, but Rose Williams does appreciate ladies booking their places each time to ensure that there is enough food. (We have not run out yet!) We have 25 to 45 ladies each time depending on the weather! This year we have welcomed as our speakers:

Sue Seward	talking newspapers for the blind
Penny Dent	Canine Concern
Kay Watters	God's guidance in her life
Bryony Powell	our local Police Officer
Maggie Wooster Kyte	giving her amazing testimony.

Many thanks to all our speakers and our fantastic team of efficient helpers.



Men's Breakfasts

Paul Croxford

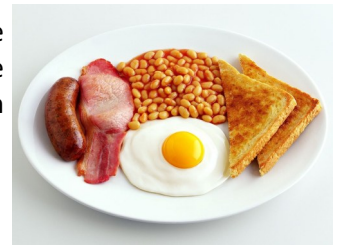
On the second Saturday of every second month, starting in January, men of our congregation, other Churches and members of the local community gather in the Church Hall for the Men's Breakfast — a valued fixture in our church calendar and an important opportunity for fellowship, encouragement, and shared reflection.

The morning begins, at 08:45, with a warm greeting and the chance to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. At approximately 09:00, a "Full English" breakfast cooked by our volunteer team, is serviced. Conversation is relaxed and welcoming, offering space to reconnect, meet new attendees, and strengthen bonds within our church community.

Each breakfast concludes with a short talk designed to prompt thoughtful discussion. The themes explored may vary, but all seek to bring encouragement and to help us reflect on how our faith shapes daily life.

Over time, the Men's Breakfast has become a meaningful occasion for fostering unity and friendship. It provides a setting where men of all ages can gather, listen, share experiences, and learn from one another in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

The breakfast is enjoyed by, on average, 30 men. Better communication with people attending, resulting in smarter purchasing of ingredients, we have been able to reduce the cost of the breakfast from £ 7.00 to £ 5.00. This still results in a small surplus, which can be used to fund unexpected purchases and expenses for speakers. For further details please email mensbreakfast@stmarysrisborough.org.uk



Gill Wilkinson

Lunch Club and Tea4All

It has been a really good fun year of Church outreach to the community at Lunch club and Tea4All. For the first part of the year we regularly welcomed an average of 45 members for lunch club and 18 for Tea4All. However by the end of the year we were regularly welcoming around 55 people each month for lunch and 20 for Tea4All. This has become very hard for the kitchen helpers and cooks and we have now decided that we have reached maximum numbers for lunch club. Tea4All could accommodate more at present. This is a difficult decision as we know there are people wanting to come to lunch but it is necessary for both space and ability to cook and serve meals safely and as far as is possible within Food Hygiene regulations. We have managed to maintain 6 people trained at level 2 and 6 people at a basic level in food hygiene as well as implementing the correct work wear for all volunteers.



We were not successful in obtaining a major grant for 2025 but were helped by a small amount of the 2024 grant from the Rothschild Foundation being delayed until March and a minor grant of £250 from Princes Risborough council. A great surprise came at Christmas when we received an anonymous donation which enabled us to give Christmas presents to all our guests and have a wonderful Christmas meal. We have now shared our news about not receiving a grant for the coming year and the cost of running lunch club with our guests and are thrilled that many of them have increased their donations which, in addition to us providing more in house entertainment, has now made us start to break even.

We have had some really great entertainments this year, celebrating VE day and VJ day, some great bands and a very interesting insight into our curate's music likes when he took part in Desert Island Discs!

As always neither of these community outreach activities could take place without some amazing volunteers, those who attend on the day, those who regularly bake cakes for us, Al who clears up for us. Eugene for cooking our Christmas lunch, Kathryn and Jenny for being so helpful over office tasks, Garth for managing the AV system and Mark who creates the videos and pictures we want to show.

2026 looks like being a challenging year as we continue to try and keep within the budget of our donations, but, we know, that if God is with us, He will provide.



Lunch Club helpers serving the Christmas Lunch

Review of Proceedings of PCC 2025— 2026



The year began with the church in vacancy and the first PCC meeting of the year in February was attended by Jonathans Hawkins, Area Dean, and Asa Humphreys, Parish Development Adviser (Buckingham). Asa outlined the process for filling the vacancy, starting with the Section 11 meeting, the election of 2 lay representatives who formally represent the PCC in the appointment process including shortlisting and interviewing of candidates, the writing of the Parish Profile and advertising the post. Neil Dyson and Heather Hardy were appointed as our representatives. A Vacancy team was created to consider what our requirements were for a candidate & what should be included in the Parish Profile.

The Section 11 meeting took place later in February and involved the Clergy and representatives from the Team Churches. Bishop Dave would be the lead person from the Diocese and Lord Carrington and the Bishop of Oxford were named as patrons on behalf of the Diocesan Patronage Board. The Safeguarding Policy was approved in March.

In April the PCC accepted the resignation of our Pioneer Minister, the Revd Sue Hughes, who has been appointed to the post of Associate Minister at St Mary's Haddenham. Her last Sunday with us was June 1st when a farewell 'bring & share' lunch was held after the morning services. The APCM was held on 29th April and Neil and Heather were re-appointed as Churchwardens. New members voted for a term of 3 years were: Bryan Mathew, Hannah Moore, Ronel Murray, Sue Seward, Peter Cline and Biddy Gilman.

The Parish Profile was considered at the Section 12 meeting in May and then finalised before the advert went live in June. The Health & Safety policy was approved at the May meeting, when it was also noted that we still have a vacancy for a Health & Safety Officer. Meanwhile thanks were given to Paul Seward for undertaking the associated paperwork and keeping the policy documents updated. The Treasurer warned that our income from planned giving had fallen whereas expenditure had increased, therefore, unless action is taken we could be looking at a deficit at the end of the year as high as £80k. It was agreed to discuss the formation of a Giving Group at the PCC half day away in June. This was hosted by Neil Dyson at Holly Farm and included a mixture of social times and discussion along with watching together a video on Stewardship & Giving in church. It was agreed to create a support group for the Treasurer and a Giving Group to look at ways in which we communicate the church's finances to church members and encourage regular giving.

Following interviews in July, the Revd Steve Benoy was appointed as Team Rector.

In July the PCC voted to go ahead with the proposal to create Group Information Packs for each church-based group including details on volunteers, safeguarding training requirements, risk assessments and H & S requirements. This will be led and administered by the Safeguarding Team. Andrew introduced his proposal to begin an Eco Church project which will ask volunteer to join a group to look at the ways in which we can improve our environmental aspects and then gain Eco church accreditation with A Rocha.

The boiler failed again over the summer and whilst we are awaiting the full results of the Net Carbon zero survey which will give recommendations for a new sustainable heating system, it was agreed to go ahead with repairs and instal a new Heat Exchanger Plate to be fitted in the cupboard next to the boiler room. The budget for 2026 was approved in October. It was agreed to reduce the PCC Giving by Resolution to our nominated charities to 10%. The December PCC meeting was a social event hosted at the Rectory by Steve & Alex Benoy.

Stewardship/ Giving Group

Jane Cotton Group Chair

St Mary's is currently in deficit and needs to increase giving from the congregation. In November 2025 the PCC therefore asked a small Stewardship/ Giving Group to examine the situation and provide advice to the February 2026 PCC meeting. The Group 's presentation to the PCC stressed the importance of much more communication, raising Awareness, Engagement, and leading to Action. The Group is continuing during 2026, supporting and advising the Rector and the PCC .

Pete Wynn has now stepped down as Assistant Church Warden and Health & Safety Officer. We are tremendously grateful for all the work he has done over the years. Please consider if you would be interested in taking on either or both these responsibilities. In the meantime we are grateful for the large number of people who undertake maintenance, tidying and cleaning of the church, its contents and the churchyard.

This is a summary of the issues that arose in 2025 and the major work carried out over the last year.

St Mary's

Church and Chapter House cleaning: We operate a rota system for cleaning the church and Chapter House on a weekly basis. There is a sign-up list on the Welcome Desk in church and we are very grateful to all who have given their time and energy to keep our buildings clean and welcoming. We would welcome more volunteers to help out—you can choose to do lighter duties as well as the more rigorous ones. Cleaning materials are provided and you can clean on different days to suit you when the church & Chapter House are not being used. Please speak to Heather Hardy if you are interested in finding out more.

Church Heating and Reducing Carbon Emissions:

We selected Environmental Engineering Partnership to undertake the Net Zero Carbon Feasibility Study on the Church and Chapter House, funded by a grant of up to £15,000 from the diocese's "Net zero carbon preparation fund". They undertook a thorough examination of the buildings and use, including structural, electrical and acoustic surveys, and considered a range of alternatives. They submitted their report late last year; it is now being considered by the PCC. The money spent so far has been reimbursed by the fund.

In the meantime we found that the gas boiler had failed after only a few months operation due to build-up of calcium carbonate from hard water. We were advised that the boiler should have been separated from the main underfloor heating system through a "plate heat exchanger". Having considered several options we repaired the boiler and installed a plate heat exchanger in the cupboard adjacent to the boiler room. The boiler has operated well throughout the winter. Several manifold valves which control the supply of heat around the building have been replaced.

Leak in North Aisle Roof:

The flood-damaged fire panel in the Chapter House lobby was replaced. The wire cages preventing leaf build-up on the roof have been effective, and the roofs have been cleared of leaves in the autumn months to prevent a recurrence of the flooding of the Chapter House.

The internal painting of the church has been postponed while the walls dry out from the flooding.

Clock and Tower: The 2019 Quinquennial Inspection Report recommended consideration is given to replacing the long wooden ladder with a new metal one. Because of safety concerns the PCC made the decision to stop the clock so there is no requirement to access the tower until a safe solution is provided. We are continuing to explore options with our architect.

Fire Separation in the Chapter House: The Quinquennial Inspection Report identified potential fire separation issues in the boiler room and the kitchen in the Chapter House. These have been examined by Churches Fire and Security, and their recommendations have been completed.

Movement cracks in church west wall: The Quinquennial Inspection Report identified potential movement of cracks in the west wall which need to be monitored. This work is underway.

St Mary's Records: The following church records, which are available for any member to see, should be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required:

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

St Peter's, Ilmer

Church Building: The 2019 Quinquennial Inspection Report identified the need to repair the chancel roof. Significant preparation has been done over the last few years to address the work and to seek funding for the estimated £35 - £40,000 cost. However, the 2024 Quinquennial Inspection Report identified that the nave roof now needs to be replaced, with associated rainwater provisions; we estimate the cost to approach £150,000. Other building issues were also identified. Because of the increased financial burden on Ilmer and the PCC, in December the PCC passed a resolution to explore actively the processes required for the closure of St Peter's, Ilmer. This is now being considered by the Rector and the PCC.



General: The local Ilmer team continues with maintenance in and around the church, including cutting hedges and regular mowing. Many thanks to this dedicated small team.

Church Hall

Paul Seward



The Church Hall continues to build its user base, albeit very slowly, and thanks are due to Pauline Aries for her work on attracting new users and on managing the hall bookings. Whilst 2025 was a year in which little renovation work was needed, the start of 2026 has seen major expenditure on the heating system which has used up all the excess income gained in 2025.

James Gamon has joined the Committee, and thanks are due to all the Committee Members for their personal efforts and their careful stewardship. Biddy Gillman has also joined our painting team as we use 'Forth Bridge' principles to keep the hall in good condition. However, we are still looking for someone much younger to join the Committee to share the maintenance load and contribute ideas to the future direction of the hall facilities.

Health & Safety

We are still looking for someone to take up the role of Health & Safety Officer to assist with keeping our buildings and environment safe for those attending church and activities held during the week. A reminder that there are **First Aid kits** (in small zipped green containers) and **Accident Record Books** at both the book shelf on the left of the entrance in Church and in the kitchen servery in the Chapter House. Please fill out a form for any accidents happening on church premises and leave the completed form in the Church Office.



Risborough Team of Churches

It is very easy to forget when looking at the APCM report that St Mary's Church is part of a team ministry. Beyond our Church walls there is a team of clergy working with our other team churches. The clergy team meet on a regular basis to support each other and discuss the work that we do across the team, sharing resources and ideas and offering each other prayer. We also meet each Wednesday morning at 8.45am for morning prayer, alternating this across our team churches.

The Risborough Team of 8 Churches was created in 1998. In addition to St Mary's and St Peter's, there are the Churches in Monks Risborough and Owlswick, Lacey Green, and Bledlow with Saunderton and Horsenden.

Churches Together in Risborough

Working together in unity to serve the community in God's love and for God's glory'

Churches Together in Risborough (CTR) has had another successful year of bringing together the Anglican, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Elim and Methodist Churches in the wider Risborough area in fellowship and faith, to witness to God's love in the local area. St Mary's was involved in helping to run a range of different services across the area. These included the Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Advent Service, singing carols during the Risborough Christmas fair, and leading the commissioning service for Lighthouse. Members of our church also helped with our Easter events including the dawn service on Easter day and the walk of witness at the Market Square on Good Friday, where we joined with other churches to bear witness to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us all on the cross.



Aylesbury Deanery

Synod met in March, June and November and a major focus for the whole year has been round Children and Youth which have features in all three meetings with a view to developing a deanery plan following the challenge by Bishop Steven to all deaneries which has developed round the work of Tmara Zimmerman and continues to be developed.

We were delighted to have Bishop Dave attend our June synod to share something of his life to date and his vision for the future and where he encouraged our deanery to take hold of the freedom that we have to shape our future together. Other Bishop news in the year was that Bishop Steven intends to retire in the summer of 2026.

In addition to a new Bishop of Buckingham, Guy Elsmore announced his retirement in the autumn as Archdeacon. The deanery was delighted with the appointment of our very own **Cassa Messervy** to the post of Archdeacon on the 1st March 26.

After much struggling the financial situation round the North Aylesbury situation is much clearer now though some discussion continues on specific matters. The deanery has had to be more circumspect with its expenditure up till now as our financial liability was somewhat unclear over the last year. Very encouragingly, the deanery paid it's share in full in 2025 though this appears unlikely to be repeated in 2026.

In terms of clergy placements within the deanery, Bierton continues to struggle to fill their House for Duty post. However, the vacancy for the Rector's position at St Mary's Princes Risborough drew a pleasing number of candidates and it was a delight to be part of the process that culminated in Steve Benoy being licensed on the 26th November. The vacancy and Peter Godden's sabbatical were well managed by the local team



of laity and clergy who were great to work alongside, leaving me mainly to worry only about a few legal matters that needed dealing with.

The deanery team of myself, with Tim Harper and Richard Philips as Associate Area Deans remains unchanged, but Graham Strachan stood down as Lay Chair and Mike Fulker from Holy Trinity Aylesbury was voted in to replace him at our November meeting.

Aylesbury Deanery Synod

Debby Cadwallader

Our churches of St Mary's and St Peter's are in Aylesbury Deanery, which has 38 churches in all. To encourage the mission and ministry of the churches we hold regular meetings for the clergy, as well as Deanery Synods, where clergy and parish representatives meet for prayer, fellowship and discussion. The Synod is led by the Area Dean, the Revd Jonathan Hawkins and the Lay Chair, Mike Fulker. Our lay parish representatives are: John Hardy and Debby Cadwallader.

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. The formula for calculating each parish's share is: 50% based on the parish's income, 35% on the numbers on its Electoral Roll and 15% on the cost of its ministry. At the Synod meeting in November 2025 the Treasurer reported that the Deanery was just about breaking even, although 5 parishes were yet to pay their share.

At the synod on June 11th 2025, we welcomed the newly appointed Bishop of Buckingham, the Rt Revd Dave Bull, who spoke about his journey into faith and how it had led him to his current position. He said that he recognised the very important contribution of Deanery Synods to the church's ministry and asked us to talk and pray about what we see God doing and where we see new life and energy. We then shared what we had discussed. Then the vicar of Haddenham reported on the work being done in the ministry to Children & Youth in the expanding community there.



Ride and Stride September 2025: £20, 857 was raised for Bucks Historic Churches Trust, of which our own super cyclist, Michael Hoey, raised £1,272.50. Thanks to his efforts, St Mary's received £827.75 for our church funds. Thank you also to the team who welcomed the 35 visitors who came to St Mary's with refreshments.

At the meeting on November 6th, 2025, in addition to the financial report as above, it was agreed that the Pastoral Committee, which is responsible for deciding the allocation of priests throughout the Deanery, would merge with the Standing Committee. It has also been decided that the Deanery will no longer organise the finance for the Quinquennial Inspections which all churches have to have, but parishes will now be responsible for financing their own QIs. Another matter raised was that in the light of a serious case of fraud in the diocese, parishes were urged to ensure that proper procedures were in place when dealing with church finances to prevent any one person being able to commit fraud.

The election for our Deanery Synod Representatives, who serve a term of three years, will be held at the APCM.

The Oxford Diocesan Vision:

to be a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world:
contemplative, compassionate and courageous;
a Church of the beatitudes.



Facebook Thoughts

Jenny King

Our Facebook Thoughts are published on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We are grateful to our group of 8 writers who continue to produce such inspirational and informative thoughts. We could always do with more contributors so if you feel you could write something on either a one off or regular basis we would be very grateful to hear from you. You can access the Thoughts on Facebook via the St Mary's website.



Enews

Jenny King

The Enews is issued as an email once a week on a Thursday afternoon and gives information on the following week's services as well as events and activities coming up in the future. It also has the Thought for the Day and a diary of events. We have 190 subscribers but would like to encourage everyone to sign up. This can be done easily by going to the St Mary's website and clicking on where it says 'sign up for enews'. This is the easiest way to kept in touch with what is happening at St Mary's.



St Mary's Monthly Message

Kathryn Trout

The Monthly Message provides a thought from the clergy, usually an interview with a church member, or sometimes an overview of a particular church event or activity, and an overview of service dates for the month ahead. Over the last year this has included: a farewell interview with Sue and Jason Hughes when Sue left to join the Benefice in Haddenham, an update on the Eco Church Project at St Mary's, welcome to Steve & Alex Benoy and Lesley Tate, Children's & Families Minister and an outline on Giving in Church.

The newsletter is circulated via email to subscribers both from the church and wider community and is also available on the website. Alternatively pick up a copy from the Welcome Desk in church and feel free to take copies for friends and neighbours.

St Mary's Website

Kathryn Trout

The website has been running in its current design & format for over a year now. We undertake updates and tweaks as necessary and keep the news posts and calendar updated. We will probably be considering some more changes to the structure and content of the website over the next year to reflect changes in our church focus, services and activities. Please have a look at the website and if your area of activity is not represented or you wish to suggest changes, please get in touch with the Parish Office.

Data Protection

Paul Seward

Data protection remains governed by the 2018 act with few changes since then and so no further work on procedures or processes has been necessary. The need for the protection of personal data seems reasonably ingrained into those who manage church activities and there have been no overt breaches over the last year.

Churchwardens' Closing Remarks



Heather Hardy



Neil Dyson

For a church in an interregnum, we have in this document evidence of a church family continuing all the activities and support for our community that we have always done.

The year was never dull, and as we prepared our profile to select a new Rector, Sue Hughes our Pioneer Priest was offered an exciting position in Haddenham and left in June. Before we even managed the interviews for a new Rector, we had appointed Lesley Tate as our part-time children and families worker. In addition, we set up a working group from the PCC and other church members to explore how we could put our church on a firmer financial footing to arrest the recurrent deficit budgets that we have been setting.

But what stands out, is the sheer number of people involved. We would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone again for all the effort over the last year. However, there is a “stand out” thank you to Andrew, Kathryn and Jenny for all the additional work which they undertook to provide administrative support and well as spiritual and pastoral care. The church this year has been like the swan gliding over the mill pond, no one sees what is happening beneath the surface.

IN MEMORIAM

We remember with love those Church Members who passed away in the last year:



Judith List
Geoffrey John
Ann Phillips
Joyce Bapty
Janet Edwards
Pearl Knight

[www: stmarysrisborough.org.uk](http://www.stmarysrisborough.org.uk)

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