

October 2025

St Mary's Monthly Message



A Note From Tony

Why Volunteering Matters in the Church

When many people think of church, they think of Sunday services, songs and sermons. If you know the parish better you may also think of activities like Lunch Club and Play Cafe. But behind every welcoming smile, every friendly space, every children's class, and every cup of coffee there's something far more powerful at work: a spirit of service. Because volunteering is more than just helping out — it's reflecting of Jesus himself.

In John 13, we see an unforgettable moment: Jesus, the Son of God, kneels to wash his disciples' feet. It was a job no one wanted — one reserved for the lowest servant. But Jesus does it willingly, then says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). In other words, serving is not optional for followers of Jesus — it's essential.

The early church knew this well. In 1 Peter 4:10, believers are reminded: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace." Whether it's teaching, greeting, cleaning, fixing, encouraging, or quietly praying — every act of service builds the body of Christ. And it's not about being perfect or having loads of time. It's about saying, "God, use me."

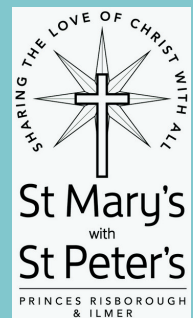
In today's world, where people are often stretched thin and over-committed, serving at church can seem like just another task. But in God's kingdom, it's a holy calling. It's one of the most practical ways we live out our faith and love our community.

So what does serving look like for you? Maybe it's stepping into a new role. Maybe it's picking up something you once laid down. Or maybe it's simply asking God, "Where can I be useful? Whatever it is, know this: when you serve, you reflect Jesus. And there is no greater purpose than that.

"The greatest among you will be your servant." — Matthew 23:1

God bless

Tony Eccleston, LLM



What's inside?

Spotlight on the volunteers who help at our Monthly Lunch Club and weekly Play Cafe

In Other News...

Dates for your Diary

Prayers for this month

Spotlight on Play Cafe by Avis Arthey

I started to volunteer because I know that our local parent and toddler group was a lifeline to me when I first had children. It can be very lonely as a new parent. Some of our closest family friends today are people I met 40 years ago at a church toddler group. I am also aware how much our grandchildren gained from the parent and toddler group at their church, plus I love small children!

As a relatively older newcomer to the area, it gives me an opportunity to interact with younger people, which is why I love serving the refreshments. The volunteers from church who run it are just such a lovely bunch of people! They're so friendly and cheerful.

The children love playing on the soft play equipment which fills the main part of the church. The older ones love the craft activities which are brilliant, age-appropriate and well designed by our volunteer Pauline

The adults appreciate the chance to talk to other mums and dads and I think the grandparents like having something that's relatively inexpensive and passes the time when they're doing childcare. It can be a long day!

How does your Christian faith inspire your volunteering?

I think it's a lovely non-threatening way to share God's love and open the building to a wide range of people. We're not asking anything of them: it just gives us an opportunity to be a listening ear and to welcome them into the church. I called one of the mums by her name and she was amazed that I'd remembered it. She said "That's what I love about this place, people know your name."

Spotlight on Lunch Club by Elaine Needham

I started off helping at Holiday at Home, a 2 day event twice a year, winter and summer. It was so popular that we were asked if it could be more often. Gill originally told me that it would be soup and a roll, monthly, so I imagined helping from 11-2, little did I realise that it would be more like 8.30-4.30!!

I keep coming back because the day gives so much pleasure and enjoyment to the elderly in the area, 90% of whom never normally set foot inside a church. They see that we're not stuffy, we're kind, warm, caring and open to all.

The clients appreciate nearly everything about the day and often arrive before 10 am (start time). Most are widows and widowers, so may see very few people normally day to day. There is great competition to play Rummikub and some spend all morning playing.

One of my funniest moments was trying to serve up 50 plates of spaghetti Bolognese! Never again - spaghetti is very difficult to dish up en-masse after the first few servings, trying to keep it warm too isn't easy and I had spaghetti everywhere except on the plates! Not having a proper kitchen in the church is a challenge but we can run across the road to the church hall to use the oven and dishwasher - just harder to keep an eye on things.

How does your Christian faith inspire your volunteering?

I once did a survey to see what my Christian leanings were and it came out as hospitality. I'm not one for standing up in front of people, I'm not learned and erudite, don't find speaking in public easy, but can make a good cup of coffee, cook and serve up a meal and am always happy to do the washing up.

It's a real pleasure to be part of the small team that put on Lunch Club, it's hard work but the clients are so appreciative of what we provide - coffee/tea and biscuits, games, quiz, 2 course lunch, entertainment then tea and homemade cake - all free, we just ask for a contribution. It's difficult to know what the clients like most about the day, some it's just the company, some it's having a good meal and some both. But they definitely appreciate all we do.



The children love the soft play equipment



Some of the regular Lunch Club volunteers. Elaine is second from the left.



The clients enjoying their Christmas Lunch

In other news...

Ride and Stride in aid of Historic Churches

Michael Hoey who visited 50 churches around Oxford on his bike in one day raised £1,000 in sponsorship. Thank you to all who contributed. The Friends of Bucks Historic Churches will again be holding their **Annual Lecture here at St Mary's on Weds 12 November at 7pm** - doors open at 6.30pm. The lecture on 'Church buildings and the presence of God' will be given by the new Bishop of Buckingham, the Right Revd. Dave Bull. Tickets available on the door, £13.00 to include complimentary drink. A live stream link is available upon pre-payment of £13.00 - contact Nick Morgan at: 4nick.morgan@gmail.com.

Harvest Festival will be celebrated at all morning services on Sunday 5th October. Please come along to the 'Bring & Share' lunch after the 11.15am service - all welcome. At each service you are invited to bring along food items which will be donated to the One Can Foodbank. You can also donate any week of the year - a black bin is situated outside the Chapter House door and is emptied weekly. Thank you.

Charities voting: Thank you to everyone who put forward nominations for charities. The PCC voted at their meeting on 18 September and two charities came out with the top number of votes so we have two major charities for 2026.

Major Charities

BRF Ministries
Impact Giving UK (David James)

Minor Charities

A Rocha
Every Life
Hamlin Fistula
Project Possible

Please speak to Kaye Lillycrop if you would like to know more about our charities.

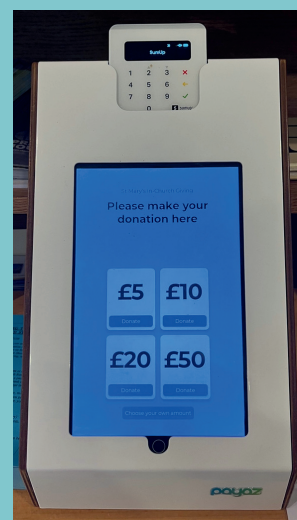
Children's Hospital Pyjamas. This charity collects donations of brand-new pyjamas from new-born to aged 18. Children who find themselves in hospital, are gifted a pair of pyjamas on Christmas Day and pyjamas are also used in other situations where children may have had their clothes cut in A&E, in an emergency situation where there hasn't been time to pack essentials, or where families live a distance from the hospital and to save them from unnecessary travel. You can take your Pyjamas to the collection point at PR Baptist church from now until the end of November.

South Bucks Talking News are seeking a couple of male volunteer 'voices' to read newspaper articles which are then recorded and distributed to blind and partially sighted people. Recordings are at the studio in High Wycombe for around 5 Friday nights in the year between 6.30pm and 9pm. Please contact Sue Seward for more information on 01844 698453 / susan.m.seward@gmail.com.

Looking ahead...

Time to Remember service on Sunday 2nd November at 3pm when we remember loved ones who are no longer with us. If you can help serve refreshments after the service please contact the office.

Remembrance Sunday Civic Service is on Sunday 9th November at 10am. A family service will be in the Parish Hall also at 10am. The Civic Act of Remembrance follows in the Marketplace at 11am.



***Don't forget
You can make regular
or one-off donations
to St Mary's at the
Payaz Terminal***

GIVING ...

... keeps St Mary's going.
From services and AV
to lighting and courses,
we rely on

Regular Planned Giving.

Please support the Church.
To get started, please contact
the Giving Secretary:
Michael Hoey
01844 275192
mhoey@btinternet.com

***Sign up for our weekly
e-news by going to the
homepage on our
website. Receive all the
news from St Mary's
direct to your phone!***

Dates for your Diary

Lunch Club: Wednesday, 1 Oct & 5 Nov, 10am-3pm in St Mary's Church

Unplugged: Contemporary worship, Sunday 12 Oct, 6.30pm in St Mary's Church

Bereavement Drop-in Group: in the Chapter House, 3pm on Monday 13 Oct

Maker & Fixer: Sun 19 Oct, 3pm in the Old Dairy, Culverton Farm

Morning Prayers at Culverton Farm: Mon & Fri mornings, 7.30am to 8am in the Old Dairy, Wycombe Road, HP27 0EU

Yurt Gathering: Wednesday evenings, Church Farm, Saunderton - see Carole Bromhall

Tea for All in the Chapter House, 2.30pm on Sunday 26 Oct

Play Cafe: Tuesdays from 9.30am to 11am in Church - no meeting on 28 October

Youth Group: Sundays during term time from 6.30pm to 7.45pm in the Chapter House

Ladies Breakfast: Sat 1 Nov, 9am in St Mary's Church Hall

Time to Remember Service: Sun 2 Nov, 3pm in St Mary's Church

Services at St Mary's and St Peter's

Holy Communion at 8am (*said*)

Parish Communion at 9.30 on Sundays in church and live streamed to your home. See the St Mary's website for the link to our YouTube channel.

Live@St Mary's all age service at 11.15 in church. Kid's Church welcomes children to join them for activities in the Parish Hall during this service - contact the Parish Office for further info on sessions.

Mid week Holy Communion is on Wednesdays at 10.30 followed by coffee.

St Peter's Church, Ilmer - Evensong & shortened HC 19 Oct at 6pm.

For your Prayers this month

Lord, send us out.

Send us out from our buildings, full of history and comfort and meaning, and lead us into your world as your disciples where the story is still being written.

Send us out with our hearts full of love and concern and fear and hope,
and lead us into your heart for this blessed and beautiful world
where the story is still being written.

Continue to bless places for lonely people to gather; soup lunches and warm spaces; moves and renovations; missions and prayer gatherings; and all the ways we seek to move from where we are to where you want us to be.

Lord, send us out. And remind us – remind me – that the story is still being written.

Amen.

Sean Turner, Methodist Church, Isle of Man

We uphold in prayer: All those bereaved, suffering ill health or facing operations.

We give thanks for: The baptism of Mylah Hamer and Emerson Oates.

Please pray for:

- The work of the Eco group at St Mary's as they explore ways in which we can reduce our carbon footprint on the earth and better care for God's creation
- Longwick School as they celebrate their Harvest Festival with us on Thursday 23 October
- Give thanks for the volunteers of Play Cafe and the Lunch Club and pray that God's love may be known through their work in our community

Copies of this newsletter are available in Church for you to collect and pass on to friends and neighbours. They are also on the website.



Join our weekly prayer meeting on Zoom every Wednesday at 9am – Zoom invite available from the Parish Office .

We encourage everyone to pray for one another. Ask the Parish Office if you would like to receive details of prayer requests.

Contact the Parish Office
parishoffice@stmarysrisborough.org.uk

Tel: 01844 273300