



St Mary the Virgin, Rickmansworth

Welcoming and serving the whole community with the love of God

Annual Meeting of Parishioners to elect Churchwardens and Annual Parochial Church Meeting

11am, Sunday 25 May 2025

All welcome

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The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024 are available on the church website.

Agendas for annual meetings to be held on 25 May 2025

Annual Meeting of the Parishioners to elect Churchwardens

1. Opening prayer
2. To receive any apologies for absence
3. To agree and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2024
4. Election of Churchwardens

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. To agree and sign the APCM minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2024
3. To receive reports as follows:
 - a. Electoral Roll
 - b. Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
 - c. Financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2024
 - d. The fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
 - e. Proceedings of Rickmansworth Deanery Synod
 - f. Reports from committees, groups and organisations of St. Mary's
4. Church of England Elections
 - a. Election of Parochial Church Council members
5. Report from the Vicar
6. Any other business
7. Closing prayers

Minutes of annual meetings held on 28 April 2024

Vestry Meeting of the parishioners of Rickmansworth to elect Churchwardens

Present: 59 parishioners

The meeting was chaired by the Vicar.

- 1) The meeting opened with prayer led by the Vicar.
- 2) Apologies for absence had been received from: Jane Earl, David Gilbert, Martyn & Gill Gowing, Geoff Hall, Paul Harding, Molly Hedges, David & Patty Hibbert, Maxine Platzman
- 3) The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2023, having previously been circulated, were approved as a correct record of the meeting.
- 4) Election of Churchwardens
Three nominations had been received and accordingly David Carruthers, Martyn Gowing and Roger Willett were elected to serve as Churchwarden for the coming year.
- 5) There being no further business, the meeting closed.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Present: 59 parishioners

The meeting was chaired by the Vicar

- 1) Apologies for absence had been received from: Jane Earl, David Gilbert, Martyn & Gill Gowing, Geoff Hall, Paul Harding, Molly Hedges, David & Patty Hibbert, Maxine Platzman
- 2) Minutes of the APCM held on 16 April 2023
The minutes were approved as a correct record of the meeting.
- 3) Electoral roll
There are 112 people on the electoral roll, a decrease of 4 from 2023.
Those had died during the year were remembered in prayer: Gillian Baker, Isabelle Bond, Anne Godfrey and John Rhodes

4) Reports

The meeting received reports, previously circulated, and were invited to ask questions:

a) Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council:

b) Financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2023

The Treasurer highlighted points of note including the increase in unrestricted funds due to the receipt of legacies and fundraising activities. However, regular giving had fallen and a deficit is still anticipated in 2024.

In previous years we have had to suspend giving a percentage of planned giving income to charity as we were running a deficit. The Treasurer was therefore pleased to report that the small surplus in the 2023 accounts will enable us to give 5% (approx. £4,000) to charity this year. This will be reviewed annually.

The Treasurer and everyone on the S&F committee was thanked for their work during the year.

c) Fabric, goods & ornaments of the church

d) Proceedings of Rickmansworth Deanery Synod

The Vicar is working closely with the Rural Dean to build the work of the deanery.

e) Committees and other groups and organisations of St Mary's

The Vicar warmly thanked everyone who had worked so hard to support and enhance the church during the year. He encouraged people to respond to calls for help.

5) Elections

The following were elected to serve for three years: Gill Bayley, Andrew Bond, David Gilbert, David Hibbert, Maxine Platzman, Adam Shiels, Hilary Stevenson.

6) Appointment of the Independent Examiner for the accounts for St Mary's PCC

Nicola Anderson, the church's Independent Examiner for a number of years, has tendered her resignation as she is retiring. The Treasurer is investigating her replacement whom he will submit to the PCC for its approval.

7) Report from the Vicar

The full report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Vicar said that he is greatly encouraged by the church, its generosity, creativity and welcome. He has found a strong sense of family at its heart.

He thanked everyone who had worked to run the church in the vacancy and welcomes people to speak with him about any issues.

8) Any other business

a) Organist: Advertisements have gone out to advertise our need for an organist. There was nothing to report.

b) Vicarage: There has been no progress on the building of a new vicarage. However a new person has been appointed to the property team at the Diocese and it is hoped they will prioritise this project. Meanwhile work is being done at 63 Church Street to improve the facilities for the Vicar and his family.

c) Thanks were expressed by Beryl Baker to those who enabled St Mary's to remain open during the day. It is well used and appreciated by many visitors.

d) Sincere thanks were expressed to the Vicar for his tireless work to get to know the parish in his first six months in Rickmansworth. His hard work is evident.

The meeting closed with a service of new beginnings.

Reports from committees/teams

Electoral roll

This year, the Electoral Roll had to be completely renewed as is required to be done every six years. A completely new Electoral Roll has therefore been drawn up, and the total number of people on the new roll is 103, a decrease of 9 from 2024-25.

Changes to C of E Electoral Roll:

- New members added to revised roll: 17 new members are included in the revised roll.
- Previous members not added to revised roll: 26 names who were on the 2024-25 roll are not included in the new roll

Revision of C of E Electoral Roll for 2026: For revising the Electoral Roll for 2026 and onwards until 2031, we annually update the roll to add the names of those who joined St Mary's during the year and take off those who have indicated that they wish to be removed from the roll.

In the meantime, it is helpful to me (as Electoral Roll Officer) if people can inform me, or a member of the Clergy Team who will pass the information on, if they change their address or other details (e.g. email or telephone number. This also helps to ensure that the contact information we hold within the parish is up to date.

John Glidden, Electoral Roll Officer

Parochial Church Council

The PCC met six times during the year (April 2024-March 2025).

All members of the PCC served on a sub-committee/team. The former Community & Outreach committee was divided into two: Mission & Outreach and Community & Events. Membership of the committees was augmented by people who were not on the PCC which has helped share the workload. The terms of reference for these teams were reviewed and agreed.

At each meeting, the Treasurer presented a financial report with up-to-date information on income and expenditure against budget.

The safeguarding of vulnerable people is the responsibility of the PCC and one which it takes seriously. During the year the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Hilary Stevenson, provided regular updates to the PCC. The PCC has complied with its duty to have due regard to House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The workload for the PSO was increasing and the PCC were extremely appreciative of the work done by Hilary and her team.

The PCC was delighted to welcome Ven Charles Hudson, Archdeacon of St Albans, to a special meeting where news and updates were exchanged. The PCC was able to express its concern about the unsuitable accommodation for the Vicar.

During the year a range of topics were put before the PCC for discussion and decisions including:

- Appointment of a new Church Administrator
- Appointment of a new Director of Music
- Appointment of a new Independent Examiner
- Extension to the north porch and improving access to the church
- Revision of the Mission Action Plan
- General maintenance issues
- Work on the bells, including an outline project to recast the ring
- Replacement of the PA and sound system
- Eco Church

During the year the Vicar had taken on added responsibilities including becoming Assistant Rural Dean and overseeing the Vacancy at Mill End. The PCC was mindful of this extra workload.

Most of the work at St Mary's is undertaken by parishioners who give their time and skills to keep everything running smoothly. We are truly grateful to everyone for their contribution to the life of our church. There is a constant need for people to step up and volunteer, either for specific projects or to join teams, and it is hoped that such appeals for help will receive a positive response going forward.

Buzz Coster, Secretary to the Parochial Church Council

Churchwardens

The Archdeacon's annual inspection was carried out by Rev Simon Cutmore, the Rural Dean, who found that everything was in order.

During the year the following topics were high on the churchwardens' agenda:

- Rebuilding the Vicarage: This project had stalled with no visible way forward resulting in the churchwardens writing to the Bishop raising their concerns. When Archdeacon Charles visited in November he agreed that the situation was unsatisfactory but his property team were doing all they could to resolve the matter. The churchwardens continue to press the Archdeacon's office for a solution.
- Rebuilding the churchyard boundary wall: This has now been completed by TRDC following the demolition by a car.
- Repairs to the bells: These were required on health and safety grounds and have been completed.
- Appointment of a new organist: The new organist started at the end of April.
- Installation of a new sound system in the church: Completed and has much improved the sound reproduction.
- New nursery hiring in the church centre: The contract with Woodland Wanderers Nursery has been signed and they should be starting mid-summer.

A number of further projects are ongoing and are dealt with in the various committee reports.

Roger Willett, Churchwarden

Community and Events Team

The Terms of Reference for the Team are:

- Encouraging and helping plan events that raise our profile and build positive relations with the wider community
- Enhancing social unity within the church and its members through events that help build up the church community
- Encouraging social events and activities across the generations that are welcoming and inclusive
- Encouraging others to join the church community and to feel attracted to it
- Helping to raise funds for the church

Our first meeting was in June 2024 and our first decision was that we wished to be known not as a committee but as a Team. This it has proved to be with all members enthusiastically contributing ideas and helping with events and activities.

As you will have noticed, in November we had over 2,000 poppies decorating the church. The poppies were knitted or crocheted by members of the church, their friends and families and by members of local organizations.

In December we had a stall at the Christmas evening in the High Street at which children were able to make snowmen out of marshmallows and jelly tots – this was extremely popular and a good place to hand out flyers with details of Christmas services. We once again had our very successful Christmas Tree Festival in church with 26 groups taking part and contributing decorated trees. There were a great many visitors to the church and money was made from refreshments, provided at weekends..

We also had smaller events, a Harvest Bring and Share lunch for church members and The Parish Pantry with coffee and cakes and books for sale. The latter was well supported by the congregation but we failed to attract as many from outside the church as we had hoped. In future we need to increase and extend our publicity.

Going forward, we look forward to an Easter Craft morning, a Quiz, providing refreshments for the VE80 celebration, an Open Day on 17th May and a Midsummer Bring and Share lunch.

In future planning, we need to consider events that will involve the wider community to a greater extent and to further our links with The Batchworth Community Council.

Judith Haigh

Fabric & Churchyard Committee

Team members 2024-2025: Martyn Gowing (Chairman), Paul Harding, Petra Hedges, David Hibbert, Gary Norman, Maxine Platzman, Hillary Stevenson and Churchwardens David Carruthers and Roger Willett.

The main responsibility of this team is to ensure that the Church buildings and churchyard are maintained to a reasonable standard in accordance with Statutory Regulations (electrical, gas and water) as well as Building Regulations, Planning and Health & Safety.

We are in regular contact with Matthew Stevens and Jess Wood of MDP Architects, who are working on various projects for the St Mary's. Work to reposition the rainwater downpipe from the Chancel roof has been completed which will hopefully stop the leak in the Vicar's Vestry roof. The North Porch and Access Layby project is nearly up to the planning application stage. Following the Quinquennial Report, a drain survey was carried out which indicated that work was required to the two rainwater soakaways, as well as possible problems with the foul sewer. The report on the bell frame indicated some urgent work which was carried out. However, repair and maintenance packages from MDP Architects for other proposed Quinquennial works are still awaited.

We have liaised with TRDC regarding the repair work to the churchyard wall. An outside water tap was installed to enable the work without leaving the tower open for access to water.

The Gardening Group [see separate report] keeps us informed regarding their work and we have liaised with the DAC regarding their proposals for an area of trees and benches in the area adjacent to the care home.

The wooden hall floor was sanded and resealed last summer as it had been neglected since the Covid outbreak. This is required about every ten years with an annual scrub and application of additional sealer. However, the floor was badly damaged by a hirer and we have submitted an insurance claim to cover the cost of redoing the work this summer.

During the current year we have also been looking at how we can start to achieve the Church of England goal of achieving net carbon zero by 2030. The Eco Church survey was completed, and we have been given a Silver Award. We have also applied for and obtained a free 'Energy and Net Zero Carbon Audit' which we will be reviewing at our next meeting. In addition to this report, we have also investigated the installation of solar panels and the replacement of the remaining fluorescent lights with LEDs, which will be considered at the same time.

In addition to the bi-monthly meetings, the team organises a monthly cleaning and maintenance working party on a Saturday morning. During this time the emergency lights are tested and fire extinguishers checked. Depending on the number of volunteers on the day, cleaning and simple maintenance tasks are carried out such as replacing lamps and clock batteries, descaling kettles, checking the feet of folding tables and chairs so that floors are not scratched, cleaning the carpets in the quadrangle, regenerating the water softener as well as cleaning areas of the Church, particularly areas where the cleaning contractor has no access.

The bellringers have checked the application of Smartwater on the Church roof and reapplied the solution where necessary.

Martyn Gowing, Chair

Goods and Ornaments of the Church

The Registers and Records of the Church are all in good order without any new or withdrawn items in the last 12 months.

The churchyard, which is closed, is generally well maintained by the local authority, and our own internal churchyard maintenance group have significantly improved the state of the church yard and replanted the area behind the church office. Following representation from the Church Council, Hertfordshire County Council have carried some pathway repairs using paving slabs.

The new garden of Remembrance (2023), for which a Faculty was obtained is now in use and up-to-date plans for the location of the ashes placed there have been prepared, and are held in the Church Office. Swift boxes are to be installed on the Church tower in 2024 and permission for this have been obtained from the Diocese.

Plans to make the church more easily accessible continue to be worked on and are currently in the hands of our architects. In addition to making church access easier via the north door, detailed consideration is being given to improving access to the church by car for the disabled. Full liaison is taking place and all necessary approvals will be sought when plans are available.

We wish to reorganise and renovate the room at the base of the tower to provide a more suitable space to be used by children during services. Some simple improvements have been made but we would like to upgrade this space further to make it more welcoming and suitable for younger children attending services there.

There are plans to divert the down pipe carrying drainage over the vestry roof and this will be handled at the same time and as part of the quinquennial work to be carried out this year.

Finally we are planning to carry out major maintenance work on the church bells and if DAC approval is required then this will be sought.

Roger Willett, Churchwarden

Stewardship and Finance Committee

The Stewardship and Finance Committee of the Parochial Church Council have met formally on four occasions since the 2024 APCM. At each meeting, progress against the agreed budget for 2024 was monitored and discussed.

Other topics addressed during the year included:

- Review of various policies & procedures for approval by the PCC (eg, Procurement, Charitable Giving)
- Reviewing the level of hire charges for the Church Centre / Church for final approval by the PCC
- Reviewing the level of payments for the Parish Secretary and Organist for final approval by the PCC
- Reviewing the level of fees for ad-hoc facilities provided by St Marys for final approval by the PCC
- Preparation of the draft budget for 2025 for final approval by the PCC

During 2024, various individuals ran or organised fund-raising activities that raised some £5711 for St Mary's. and it is hoped that further events will take place this year. As a committee, we would like to express our appreciation of their work. We would also encourage everybody to support these activities – and to suggest/run further fund-raising schemes. Continued use has been made of on-line and contactless ways of receiving contributions and donations outside the Planned Giving scheme, particularly via the Payaz contactless terminal.

For 2024, we were initially expecting to be facing a deficit of income over expenditure for the day-to-day expenses of running the Parish. However, we ended the year with a surplus on day-to-day spending but this was due to several unexpected factors that we cannot guarantee will happen again in 2025:

- We received a generous legacy and a high continued level of additional donations from members of the congregation (i.e. outside the planned giving scheme) – for which thanks.
- You supported our fundraising activities – so thanks again to those who organised and participated in these

The S&F Committee would like to highlight the fact that day-to-day income will continue to be challenging and warn that the underlying position is not as healthy as it may appear from the accounts.

For 2024, after final approval by the PCC, the S&F Committee was able to recommend St Mary's donating a portion of the money received as part of our Planned Giving/Stewardship to charities as was our usual practice. The sum of £4,436 was agreed. In addition, £603 has also been raised for outside charities from contributions by members of the congregation.

So, looking forward for 2025, our discussions again took place against a background of St Marys being in a difficult financial situation regarding the income and funds that may be used for the day-to-day expenses of running the Parish. We are budgeting for an end of year deficit of £15,000.

This is due to several factors, including:

- 1) Certain expenses incurred in the work of the Parish will increase, e.g. for our Director of Music and other outreach and growth projects being planned, although some of these will be covered by using funds from a legacy received during 2024.
- 2) Due to the recent high rate of inflation, we will be faced with some major increases in costs going forward.
- 3) Income from the hire of the Hall will drop considerably following the closure of the Building Blocks Nursery in February. However, a Hall Hire contract with a new nursery organisation has been agreed, but this will not be fully effective until September 2025.

It is our hope that we will be able to continue our practice of donating a percentage of the money received from our Planned Giving/Stewardship to various charities. However, this is subject to our financial performance for 2025 and the viability of donating to charities from Planned Giving.

Finally, we would like to thank everybody who has contributed to the life of St Marys, whether financially or using their time and talents.

John Glidden, Chair, Stewardship and Finance Committee

Mission and Outreach Committee

Midway through 2024 we decided that to allow a clearer focus on the missional work of this committee, we should separate the social elements of the Community and Outreach Committee into a new committee called the Outreach and Events. The work of this committee has been reported separately to the APCC (see within this set of APPC reports).

This change had been identified during the previous year when it was reported in the APPC notes, when we reported that we should consider "a shift in focus towards our ministry and outreach role. The social elements previously handled by this committee will be continued, but could be managed by a separate team".

The Missional Elements of the previously named Community and Outreach Committee is now being handled by the Mission and Outreach Committee.

The first task of the M & O committee has been to focus on revising our Mission Action Plan (MAP). A copy of which MAP is attached. This MAP was presented to the PCC in February

We agreed that the MAP should continue:

- 1) To grow in how we reach out and welcome people
- 2) To grow in wise stewardship and management of resources
- 3) To develop empowered and inspiring leadership

Music

We plan to move forward on a number of fronts engaging in mission with Children, Families and Youth across the community.

Our first action was to recruit a new dynamic Director of Music. This happened at the end of 2024 and work started on engaging with schools in the area but unfortunately due to ill health the Director was unable to continue to work with us and subsequently passed away.

We have subsequently recruited a new Music Director who will start work with us after Easter. We have lots of ideas on how to develop our plans. We look forward to building on our existing choir as we move forward, and also to look to consider developing a community choir and even a rock choir.

We also intend to promote St Mary's as a venue for musical events.

Families, Children and Young People:

We are making changes in the church to make our children's area more visible and attractive. We also are planning an Easter Craft event and are also considering other holiday club activities. We also plan to consult with children at St Mary's School to find out what they would like to do in church.

Going Deeper into God

We are organizing 3 Lent study groups using material from York.

We would like to promote Prayer Spaces in church where people can be guided in acts of prayer and meditation.

Explore the possibilities of running courses to meet demand and respond to interest (eg, Alpha and Seekers Courses)

The NEW service on the third Sunday is being considered and plans to introduce a different format is to be considered .

This year has been included a significant period of planning and contemplation of how to address the challenges ahead and we are looking forward to moving forward with a number of new initiatives in the year ahead. Of course there is still overlap between the M & O and the Events and Outreach Committees and we have several members on both committees

The M&O activities will of course rely on every member of St Mary's church supporting it in prayer and action.

David Carruthers, Chair, Mission and Outreach Committee

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Leadership Team

Vicar	Rev Gary Norman
Lay Vice Chair of the PCC	Jane Earl
Deputy Safeguarding Officer	Sue Johnson
Deputy Safeguarding Officer	Janet Lucas
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Hilary Stevenson

This Parish is committed to the safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults and to supporting those who have been victims of abuse, as well as those who may present a risk to others.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (to have due regard to the House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

The PCC adopted the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance, as well as "Promoting a Safer Church" (child protection and vulnerable adults' policy), the Safeguarding policy, the Domestic Abuse statement and the Recruitment (Ex Offenders) policy, at their meeting held on 9 September 2024. The latter three documents are displayed on the Church website.

A Safeguarding Data Privacy Notice was approved by the PCC in July 2024. A copy is available to view on the Church website's policies page.

There is a Parish Safeguarding Officer, a Lead Recruiter, and an Assistant Recruiter.

Those who join activity groups working with children, young adults and/or vulnerable groups in the Parish are recruited in accordance with the Practice Guidance on Safer Recruitment. DBS checks are monitored in line with the Church of England's guidance that DBS checks must be renewed every three years. Those who have been safely recruited and all PCC members have completed the required safeguarding training within the last 3 years.

Contact details for those wishing to obtain advice, raise concerns or make referrals to the statutory authorities are posted on the noticeboard at the back of Church, in the Church Centre and in the Vestry.

A leaflet is also available at the back of church with information about how to raise a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda of every PCC meeting and the Safeguarding Leadership team meets in advance of every PCC meeting.

There is insurance cover for activities involving children, young people and/or vulnerable adults undertaken in the name of the Parish.

I am grateful to my colleagues in the safeguarding leadership team for their work in ensuring that we are compliant with safeguarding procedures and policies.

And, to those of you who have complied with the recent request to complete safeguarding training, I thank you.

To the PCC, I also extend my thanks as they support the work we are doing to comply with safeguarding procedures and policies.

Together, we are ensuring that our church can be a safe place where people can come to worship or to visit.

Hilary Stevenson, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Deanery Synod

The Deanery Synod met 3 times during the year in July November and February

At the July meeting, we met here at St Mary's, the speaker was Rev Canon Paula Gooder – Canon Chancellor at St Paul's Cathedral. She gave an uplifting illustrated talk about embracing the time between the Festivals She said that we should allow time for reflection and not be busy for the sake of keeping busy. In the business of the meeting there were discussions on the timetable for election of members of the Diocesan Synod and Jane Earl was coopted onto The Diocesan House of Laity and was elected to be Lay chair of the Deanery Synod.

As Simon Cutmore was leaving the Diocese this was his last meeting as Rural Dean and he was thanked for his leadership and in establishing the Trinity Project.

The November meeting was held on Zoom and there was a guest speaker Rev Mark Rodel – Deputy Director on Mission and Ministry for St Albans Diocese and a Minister in Harpenden. He was researching at thesis on "Villages in a Vacancy". In a vacancy there is a need to develop lay leadership, he went on to say that churches could and should play a role in life of the local community, and that Mission was often being a good neighbour.

We were updated on the Trinity Project and its progress in obtaining charitable status The meeting welcomed Rev Tolu George who is the new assistant curate at All Saints, Croxley Green. This meeting was Charles Burch's first meeting as Rural Dean.

The February meeting was also held here at St Mary's. At the November Synod it had been decided that time should be given for Parishes to share news. At this meeting therefore each Parish was asked to discuss their experiences and challenges. The idea was that this would lead to the basis of a Deanery MAP.

Sue Hillier

Reports on the life of the church at St Mary's

Bellringing

We have managed to be able to ring on most Sundays, provided with have at least 5 ringers, though ideally 6 ringers are the ideal minimum.

This means we haven't been able to ring all 10 of our bells during the past 12 months. Luckily, we now have 3 learners who have joined us from the parish. One of these learners will soon be joining in with our Sunday ringing.

We haven't any weddings to ring for in the last 12 months.

We could certainly do with more ringers as note in the weekly pew sheet refers.

On a tremendous positive note, one of our ringers, the Revd. Mary Kingsley, has generously offered to pay for a new ring of 10 bells or even 12 bells which will also require a new bell frame.

Mary is at the moment, preparing a number of documents that a Faculty for the Diocese to approve, so that this work can be undertaken.

David Hibbert, Tower Captain

Children's Church

Children's Church Report for the AGM 2025

Children's Church meets in the Tower Room during term time. Children of three years and under are accompanied by a parent or guardian. Various 'play activities' are set out: toys, books, puzzles, games and crayoning equipment. For those of 4+ years material is used from the Sermons 4 Kids website based on Bible stories.

We have just celebrated Children's Church's second birthday; it is part of our church's mission to families. The children and parents who attend varies from week to week and those who come comment on the warm welcome and happy environment.

A new development has been the Refurbishment of the Children's Corner by the Mission and Outreach Committee. This will have the dual purpose of being an extension of Children's Church into the body of the church on Sundays if parents prefer, also its availability during the week to visitors.

Children's Church could not run without the steadfast help, warmth and care from these Leaders who are on the rota: Alison, Dorothy, Helen, Jane, Janet, Rachel, Margaret and Tracey.

Jean Dodds, Children's Church

Churchyard Community Gardening Group

This group help the Three Rivers District Council maintenance teams look after and improve the churchyard grounds. Not all members of the group are church members but all share an interest in the welfare of the churchyard. We generally meet on the third Tuesday of each month as well as at other times when specific tasks are arranged. The gardeners liaise with the St Mary's Fabric and Churchyard Committee and seek the agreement of this committee for any specific churchyard gardening related activities. If further information is needed for the APCM please contact Timothy Tims.

Timothy Tims

Flower arrangers

This year we have been building on our aim to reduce the use of plastic floral foam (Oasis) in our arrangements and to use where possible locally grown flowers and foliage. These are the guiding principles of the Sustainable Church Flowers movement which is growing in numbers throughout the country.

To this end, last October Julie Smethurst gave a demonstration in the church of two sustainable flower arrangements to our flower team and to other members of the congregation. This was an enjoyable and sociable morning designed to publicise this more modern way of thinking about flower arranging.

Sponsored pedestals have continued to be popular, mostly in memory of a loved one, but occasionally celebratory ones too, e.g. for a wedding, baptism, wedding anniversary.

Last Easter we asked for financial donations towards the Easter flowers and the general flower fund - we hope to do the same this year. This collection has enabled us to provide weekly pedestal arrangements, where they are not sponsored, and to decorate the church at festivals. We have been very grateful to receive additional foliage from parishioners' gardens to support our decorations. At Christmas we helped make and decorate the Gardening Group's 'dogwood tree' for the Christmas Tree Festival.

We now have a group of six ladies able to arrange pedestals and some further volunteers who have helped at Easter and Harvest. All enjoy arranging the flowers and find it a peaceful and creative way to spend a Friday or Saturday morning. We hope that our results continue to give pleasure to the congregations and to visitors to the church.

Lizzie Tims

Girlguiding at St Mary's

Rainbows

Both Rainbows Units at St Mary's, (1st Rickmansworth on Mondays and 4th Rickmansworth on Fridays), are for girls aged between 4 and 7. Both are thriving, with 14-18 current Rainbows, and spaces available. We run both Rainbows Units together with myself being Leader in Charge of 1st Rickmansworth and Lee-Anne as Leader in Charge of 4th Rickmansworth with the help of young leaders and rangers completing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

During 2024, we have enjoyed a wide and varied programme with the girls following the Girl Guiding programme. The GirlGuiding programme is built around six themes (Know Yourself, Express Yourself, Be Well, Have Adventures, Take Action and Skills for the Future). At our meetings we continue to enjoy a wide range of games, crafts, and working towards earning badges.

Yvonne Wells, Leader, 1st Rickmansworth (St Mary's) Rainbows

Brownies

3rd Rickmansworth Brownies continues to meet weekly with around 24 girls aged 7-10 taking part each term. We follow a vibrant and varied programme of activities, offering the girls the opportunity to explore the world around them, grow in confidence, meet new friends and have fun, all whilst learning to be more resilient. This term, amongst other things we have been detectives, learning about DNA, codes, and ciphers, and secret ink. We would welcome any volunteers who wanted to support us either regularly or just sometimes.

Ali Hampton, Leader, 3rd Rickmansworth Brownies

Guides: 3rd Rickmansworth Guides

Since the last report in spring 2024, our Guide group has met regularly at the church hall and had some adventurous activities away from the hall. During the summer of 2024 we took part in the Lees Wood anniversary camp with a large number of other uniformed organisations, enjoying the activities that had been provided and giving the Guides the opportunity to choose how they spent their time in a safe environment. We also visited the aquadrome with the Canoe Trust for some paddleboarding, including building a tower of boards and balancing on it.

We supported the church gardening team, Tim and Vicky, with some weeding and planting, and attended the church fete where we had a Girlguiding stand and the Guides donated the plants they had grown for the event.

During the summer term we completed a "feel good in nature" badge which included a trip along the canal on a barge with a nature bingo card and a visit to the education centre at Batchworth Lock.

Coming back after the summer, the Guides opted to complete the Be Well theme of badges which included a fun Mixology evening, earning them the badge. In addition, we have learnt about treating burns, how to recognise a less visible illness/injury and how to respond to a medical situation quickly. We've also been testing one of Girlguiding's new badges to give feedback on how it works, so that when

they are released later this year the girls will have had the chance to add their thoughts to the final content.

In the autumn, with the darker evenings, we joined forces with another local Guide group and invited the Rickmansworth Astronomy Society to come and share more about the sky at night. This included a telescope set up outside to see Jupiter, a fascinating presentation and a wonderful chance to use 3D goggles to view galaxies.

For Christmas, we visited the care home next to the church and spent an evening with the residents talking and showing them the Christmas craft we were making.

Empowering the Guides, they designed and led 5 of our meetings in the spring term, which involved everything from sport to pampering.

The last 3 terms have been a great mix of decision making, team working, time spent in and outdoors, leading activities, supporting the local community, playing and learning.

Tracy Jenkins, Leader, 3rd Rickmansworth Guides

Rangers

Rickmansworth Rangers (for girls aged 14-18) restarted last year and currently meets alongside the Guides in the upstairs room every fortnight. Having started with 5 girls, we now have 11, and will expand to 15 in September – meaning we may need to move premises as we will have outgrown the room! All the girls have been Guides, but are now enjoying the freedom and stretch of the Rangers programme, where they decide for themselves what they want to do and largely organise it themselves. It provides a welcome opportunity to unwind from the pressures of school and meet up for fun and thought-provoking activities. Most of the Rangers also volunteer as young leaders with Rainbow, Brownie or Guide groups throughout Rickmansworth and Croxley Green.

Ali Hampton, Leader, Rickmansworth Rangers

Lunch Club

The Sunday Lunch Club has met every third Sunday this year (April 2024 – March 2025) other than in August. Invitations are sent to some 40 individuals. The numbers attending, including helpers, have increased since last year with a maximum of 38 attending our December (Christmas) Lunch. We usually have about 30 attendees.

As usual we have welcomed several new 'members' and sadly lost a few regular attendees either through death or frailty.

The opportunity to meet and chat with others is greatly appreciated.

Everyone contributes £5.00 to the cost of the meal which covers our expenditure. A two-course meal plus wine or soft drinks and tea or coffee after lunch is provided. Increased attendance has left some surplus funds which have been used to purchase four storage boxes for glasses and a meat thermometer,

In March last year both Martyn and I successfully completed a programme of training in food safety and hygiene at level 2 and passed the associated assessment. Others who help/attend lunch club have also recently undertaken food hygiene training.

The help provided by those attending as well as those who provide puddings is very much appreciated.

Gill Gowing

Lads Who Lunch

Lads who Lunch started in January 2016 as an informal gathering of men from St Mary's Church who wanted to socialise over a drink. Prior to this we only met at Church events where we usually had tasks to perform and no time to talk. We had a trial lunchtime session at the Coach & Horses in the High Street and decided to make it a monthly fixture. About five years later it became a 'formal' Church event which is publicised in the weekly pew sheet. The lunch menu ranges from bar snacks to main meals.

We meet on the first Thursday of each month. The management at the Coach and Horses reserves 20 places for us although we usually number between 12 and 18, so there is always room for new members. Don't wait to be asked!

Martyn Gowing

Joan Martin House Group

The group emerged from a Lent course at St. Mary's some years ago. We met at Joan Martin's lovely apartment in The Bury. We enjoyed the format, content, and companionship that the course generated so much that we decided to continue on a monthly basis and have done so ever since. Joan - much missed - died three years ago and we decided to continue at 15, Landford Close. I facilitate proceedings and try to 'keep order'.

We meet at 10.30 on the morning of the first Wednesday of each month. We begin with coffee and a chat, mainly focussing on those who are unwell, bereaved, or just 'wobbly'. After an opening prayer, we go round and invite each member, if they wish, to share something (a photo, an artefact, a poem, a recent triumph or disaster, a comic event, or whatever). 'Passing' is fine and each contribution is (in theory!) received without comment or further discussion. We then have ten minutes 'silence'. We then have another 'round', with each person offering a thought which has occurred to them during the silence and/or provoked by the earlier contributions in the opening 'round'. Again, no discussion and 'passing' allowed. Then 'open house' conversation. Aim to finish by noon.

Attendance is good and people seem to enjoy the experience, particularly the ten minutes 'silence' and the open friendship which the format generates.

John Shaw

Wednesday Evening House Group

Our meetings have been held in members' homes every second Wednesday evening in the month, apart from when we joined different Lent Groups and the evening of the Deanery meeting addressed by Paula Gooder. Several members of the group have led our discussions on a range of subjects including the book of Jonah, various aspects of prayer and "Holy Habits: following Jesus" - a course produced by BRF. We would be pleased to welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Jane Pummell