

Vicar's APCM Report 2026

I would like to begin by apologising for the lateness of my report this year, due to moving house over Holy Week & Easter!

Moving on (ouch)... I'd like to again say thank you to everyone for this past year

Thank you for your ongoing goodwill and support, help and encouragement

Thank you for your generosity in the sharing of your time and skills and wisdom

St Mary's is a growing church community, and that is down to you and the welcome you give to all who come to us.

Below are just a handful of the positive things people say about St Mary's and our welcome

"There will never be any words to do justice, how grateful we are to you for marrying us. As soon as we came to the first service, we felt a connection with you all, - you are so warm and inviting."

"A few of my friends had never attended a service before and they couldn't believe how welcoming you and the rest of the congregation were and they thoroughly enjoyed it."

"Sophie and I very much enjoyed the service yesterday, and it's been a pleasure getting to know the church community."

"We look forward to bringing Henry to church in the future and are thrilled to have found such a welcoming congregation."

St Mary's has a warm hearted and open atmosphere and I see this as a key part of our wider mission and witness in Rickmansworth and beyond.

It's a pleasure to be here with you and serving as your vicar

1. Mission

David Carruthers report gave a good picture of what the Mission and outreach team have been "up to".

Every meeting we have is anchored in prayer with sometimes half the meeting being devoted to listening to God in this way

I continue to work closely with our local schools and maintain strong and positive relationships with them. However as David noted our plans for Sean to build upon this haven't progressed the way we hoped.

We are again reconsidering this and how this reshapes our Mission Action Plan, and there are some potentially new and exciting ways forward in our musical outreach to the schools to be explored, and which I hope to be able to share in the very near future.

The Come and Sing events have been very popular and strengthened our perception and resolve to move forward with missional projects that are primarily linked to music and community

The work of the Community and Events team also continues to be a vital part of our mission, outreach, and church life. The team's report for this APCM meeting,

shows the wide range of events and projects they have all planned and worked hard together to provide (sometimes in partnership with others). Please pray for them and for more volunteers being willing to help with our events and projects I still strongly believe St Mary's has an exciting future and will continue to grow, please keep praying for our mission, please also invite and encourage others to come and be part of our community!

2. Worship & Spirituality

The different service booklets used throughout the year have now been rolled out. I am aware we need to improve some of them and in particular, would like to find a way of making the musical content within them more open and accessible to newcomers.

The third Sunday now has Sung Communion at the 10 and the 12:15 is a quieter more meditative Celtic Communion service

Our Lectio prayer group continues to meet almost monthly (as do our other more established house groups) We are keen to grow the lectio group and to make this form of prayer a fuller and more central part of life at St Mary's.

The permanent prayer stations in church for our many visitors, have still yet to materialize, but I am keen to progress these once things are a little quieter again The prayer board in church continues to be widely used by our community and is constantly being quickly refilled as soon as we take the post it's down to pray through them.

Having the Revd Scott and the Revd Fiona officially on team of ministers now also brings a fresh approach and style of presiding which can only enhance our richness as a church

We also look forward to our new curate Chris O Hara joining us this summer, and further enriching our worship

Music & Worship

As noted above, Sean's role as Director of Music is now largely focussed on playing at our Sunday and seasonal worship. It is encouraging to see that the choir is also beginning to grow in numbers and enrich our worship with their regular singing and monthly anthems. Kevin Jones taking up leadership of the choir has also been welcomed by its members and all involved. Kevin and Penny's connections to other choral groups and choirs are proving very valuable

The choir is always open to newcomers, and we would love to see more people join it

Sean's connections with other musicians have also enabled us to add a wider number of organists and pianists to our "bank", this has proved very helpful when arranging funerals, memorials and weddings.

The Come and Sing events have already been mentioned, a small team of people work with Sean and myself to plan and coordinate these, and we are striving to widen the range of partners being willing to shape and grow these events.

Our plans to promote St Mary's as a musical venue have met with some success, and we are keen to do more in this area. However, it does place greater strain on our wardens and volunteers to coordinate logistics, including helping provide access and closing the church, and this needs to be borne in mind as a potential limitation too

Occasional offices

The number of funerals taking place at) St Marys has notably increased over last year's total.

Sadly, linked to this, we have lost several long-term regular members of our congregation over this past year and we continue to remember & give thanks for, Michael Baker, Vicky Lewis, Anne Rhodes and Maxine Platzman, and all those who have died this year

The numbers of weddings continue to improve with 7 weddings last year and are probably going to have the same this year (I'm working on two new bookings even as I write this report).

The number of baptisms remains on a par with last year. What is especially encouraging is the number of young families continuing to attend St Marys following on from having their child baptised here. This isn't every week, but it is another sign of our growing and strengthening relationships across our parish.

It's really in my heart to grow our wedding (and baptism) ministry, but the limitations of having a smaller parish population and the complexities of legal requirements around marriage can still make this difficult for some couples to marry at St Mary's.

Growing New Disciples

Children's Church continues to be a very important part of our welcome and outreach.

New volunteers are always needed, and anyone considering joining this ministry is encouraged to contact me to arrange an initial conversation about our recruitment procedures.

We have made the children's areas more visible and suitably resourced, not only for times of worship, but also for people with children coming in to pray while the church is open. I have had several conversations over the past year with parents who have expressed their gratitude for church being open and with a suitable space they can sit with their children

We continue to display photographs of events and services that have taken place, as a visible celebration of the life and inclusivity of St Mary's.

3. Safeguarding & Safer recruitment

This essential part of church life continues to be a growing in complexity for our PSO Hilary and her team, especially so with the national changes to Safeguarding good practice being implemented across the Anglican church Again I wish to formally record my full cooperation and support in working with Hilary and the team in maintaining and growing a culture of safeguarding and

awareness This of course includes appropriate safer recruiting and safeguarding training and management of all volunteers.

4. Pastoral visiting

Visiting continues to be an important part of the life of St Mary's, though as I noted in my last report, I'm not able to maintain the pattern I began my ministry here with.

Our pastoral visiting team continues to work with me in making visits wherever & whenever needed and requested

5. Publicity and communication

Our excellent website, Instagram account and Facebook page continue to promote St Mary's events and services across our communities.

Early last Autumn a new Parish leaflet was created primarily for newcomers and visitors

The letters out have admittedly faltered in frequency of late. I hope to be able to remedy this in the coming weeks and going forward

6. Ministry team

As noted above, we now have Revd Scott, and Revd Fiona on our team, and will shortly be joined by Chris as our full time Curate this summer. This will be a training position for Chris as he begins to explore his new ministry, and this needs to be borne in mind as Chris and his family settle among us.

I continue to work closely with my deanery (and diocesan) colleagues, and have formed especially strong links with Revd Mark in the Mill End group of churches

In I am also continuing to work as Assistant Rural Dean and am mindful this workload and role could increase as Revd Miriam prepares to retire this Summer in Croxley Green, and our present Rural Dean Revd Charles prepares to retire in 2027.

At the beginning of this report I referred to our recent move of house. We are now living at Cedars House - 2 Cedars Avenue. This has been a real blessing to us as a family and will allow us to feel much more settled in our life and ministry among you.

Thanks to everyone who helped make this happen

The new house will be able to function much more effectively as a vicarage and host meetings etc

We will be holding an open housewarming event very soon – so keep your eyes peeled for further news of that!

In the meantime, as ever ...Please keep sharing the good news of all that is happening here and invite others to join us. Please also consider how your own gifts and skills can further build the kingdom of God in this place.

Blessings to you all!

Gary