



Annual Parochial Church Meetings 2026
Tuesday 24th March 2026 at 7.00pm

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The Trustees Report and Accounts to the year ended 31st December 2025 are available in a separate document.

AGENDAS

1 Meeting of the Parishioners to Elect Churchwardens

- 1.1 Apologies for Absence
- 1.2 Minutes of last Meeting of Parishioners to Elect Churchwardens
- 1.3 Churchwardens' Report
- 1.4 Election of Churchwardens

2 Annual Parochial Church Meeting

- 2.1 Minutes of last Annual Parochial Church Meeting
- 2.2 Matters arising from the Minutes
- 2.3 PCC Treasurer's Report, Trustees' Report and Accounts
- 2.4 Electoral Roll Officer's Report
- 2.5 PCC Secretary's Report
- 2.6 Safeguarding and DBS Officer's Report
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- 2.10 Inspiring Faith in Schools and the young
- 2.11 Inspiring Love through Eco Church
- 2.12 Election of four members to the Deanery Synod for three years
- 2.13 Election of twelve members to the Parochial Church Council
- 2.14 Appointment of Independent Examiner for the Accounts
- 2.15 Organisations' Reports

3 Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

- 3.1 Election of Vice Chairman
- 3.2 Appointment of Secretary
- 3.3 Appointment of Treasurer
- 3.4 Appointment of sidesmen
- 3.5 Dates of future meetings
- 3.6 AOB

1.2 Minutes of a Meeting of Parishioners to Elect Churchwardens on 18th March 2025

Present: Peter Reynolds (Vice Chairman), three members of the Ministry Team and 26 parishioners.

The Revd Prebendary Caroline Pascoe led prayers before the meeting began.

The first meeting opened at 7.06pm

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mark Sanderson, Melanie Mellor, Derek Glover, Hugh James, Pat and John Dazeley, Julian Hallett, Jean Harrison, Pauline Leggate, John Davies, Nick and Janet Nelson, Gerald Altree and Pat Milnes.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18th March 2025 were accepted as correct and signed by the Vice Chairman.

3 Churchwardens' Reports

The churchwardens' report was accepted and no questions were asked. The Vice Chairman thanked Bryan Jones and Mark Sanderson for all their work during the year.

4 Election of Churchwardens

It was proposed by Roy Milnes and seconded by Jane Rothery to elect Bryan Jones as church warden.

It was proposed by Bryan Jones and seconded by Roy Milnes to elect Mark Sanderson as church warden.

There being no other nominations, Bryan and Mark were elected as Churchwardens until the next Annual Meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm. The second meeting followed on immediately after.

1.3 Churchwardens Report for 2025

1 Worship and Ministry

St Mary's continues to provide a rhythm of worship that serves. Christmas services were again popular with, as last year, noticeable increases at our carol service in particular.

For the first 4 months of 2025 we were still in a period of vacancy. Our comments from our 2025 report are equally valid for this period and are copied here:

We feel incredibly proud and privileged to have been able to help lead St Mary's through what has been a challenging year. 2024 has also presented its share of opportunities, and we are grateful for the support and dedication of the entire St Mary's community, but especially to our wonderful Ministry Team who have shared the leadership of the church though this year of vacancy. Thank you to Caroline, Colin, David, Derek, Freda, and John, we have also greatly enjoyed working more closely with Gay and Murray (Walford), as the Vacancy Management Group.

We were delighted to welcome Revd Prebendary Kelvin Price as our Rector on 30th April and we have been working well with him from that point.

Catherine Lewis joined us as Assistant Administrator in October and has already made considerable impact working alongside Rachael Daniel, our Administrator, now on reduced hours.

2 Fabric, Buildings, and Churchyard

Please see the separate fabric report (to be found in the Annual Report and Accounts).

In September we appointed Bonnie Kitching as our architect, in succession to Richard Lamb (Hook Mason) with whom we have enjoyed an excellent relationship and achieved a great deal.

No sooner was Bonnie in post than she (and we) had to begin work on the Ross Spire in Peril project which will dominate our thinking for years to come. As a result, her appointment was followed by the recruitment of a structural engineer (John Topp), CDM Adviser (Rober Kilgouer) and a professional fundraiser to the team (Hannah Vernon).

<https://rossparishes.uk/spire-in-peril/>

Key items to note:

- The whole of our churchyard is now closed and Herefordshire Council will take over responsibility for the maintenance of the sections furthest away from the church from April 2026.
- The quinquennial inspection takes place this coming year, this will identify further areas of expenditure and repairs.
- Work will start very soon on relaying the 1895 marble sanctuary floor
- We are deeply grateful to those who give their time and skills to keep all our buildings in such good order and so clean.

3 Community Life, Fundraising and Outreach

St Mary's remains and grows as a focal point of community life in Ross-on-Wye. Our partnerships with local schools, charities, and civic organisations continue to strengthen. The church hosted numerous community concerts, exhibitions, and outreach events, which provided valuable opportunities for fellowship and mission.

The community larder, supported by members of our congregation, continues to meet significant local need, as do the regular Tuesday morning Tea and Toast sessions.

We extend heartfelt thanks to all volunteers for their dedication and compassion. Particular thanks to the members of the Fundraising Committee for another splendid programme of events, all with first class catering. To mention a few: regular suppers for our Come, Sing and Sup services, h.Art week, Saturday Coffee @ St Mary's, catering for special services.

4 Finance and Stewardship

We are grateful to all who contribute financially to the life and mission of St Mary's through regular giving, fundraising, and one-off donations. While our core income remains steady, the increased costs of utilities and maintenance continue to challenge us.

We encourage all members of our congregation to prayerfully consider their giving as we seek to ensure sustainable ministry in the coming years, and now some very substantial building repairs. Special thanks to Roy Milnes our Treasurer for his diligent stewardship of our accounts and much more besides.

Cameron Hill took over from Paul Eward as Gift Aid and Stewardship administrator at the end of 2024. Paul was a hard act to follow and Cameron has put in a lot of work to pick up the dialogue with HMRC.

5 Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a top priority. All appropriate policies are in place, and required training has been completed by those in relevant roles. Our Parish Safeguarding Officer, Judith Wiggins, continues to oversee compliance and to ensure that St Mary's is a safe and welcoming place for all. We thank her for continuing to do this demanding job.

6 Thanks and Acknowledgements

We offer sincere thanks to everyone who contributes to the ministry and mission of St Mary's – those seen or and the many unseen. From flower arrangers to welcomers, cleaners, sides people, welcomers, musicians, readers, servers, rota compilers and those working quietly behind the scenes, your service is an invaluable expression of Christian love.

We particularly wish to record our appreciation for our clergy team and PCC members for their continued dedication and prayerful support.

7 Looking Ahead

As we move into 2026, we look forward with faith, hope and love. We remain committed to ensuring that St Mary's continues to serve God and the people of Ross-on-Wye, and to continue to grow as a beacon of light in our community.

Bryan Jones and Mark Sanderson, Churchwardens

2.1 Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Tuesday 18th March 2025

1 Minutes of last Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Proposed: Roy Milnes

Seconded: Margaret Mason

Unanimous

It was resolved that the minutes of a meeting held on 21st May 2024 be accepted as an accurate record.

The Vice Chairman signed the minutes

2 Matters arising from the Minutes

There were none.

3 PCC Treasurer's and Trustees' Report

The Trustees' Report showed how the work of St Mary's has continued throughout the vacancy. The accounts had been circulated and showed the church to be in a healthy position. However, there is likely to be significant expenditure on building repairs which will eat into reserves during 2025.

The treasurer also explained that Toast & Toddle had been given a grant of £600 for equipment which explained why their expenditure was higher than in previous years.

Proposed: Paul Mason

Seconded: John Setchfield

Unanimous

It was resolved to accept the Report of the Trustees and Accounts.

The Vice Chairman thanked the treasurer for all his hard work which is much appreciated.

4 Electoral Roll Officer's Report

On 24th February 2025 there were a total of 123 members on the electoral roll following the full revision of the Roll. The next full revision takes place in 2031.

The report was accepted.

5 PCC Secretary's Report

The secretary's report which outlined the work of the PCC over the year was accepted.

There were no questions.

6 Safeguarding and DBS Officer's Report

The Safeguarding and DBS Officer's very comprehensive report was accepted.

The church was on top of all the requirements though new ones are coming in all the time. Without a Rector, the workload had been greatly increased and Judith had expressed her thanks to everyone for the level of co-operation.

Colin Leggate expressed our gratitude to Judith for keeping everyone safe.

7 Deanery Synod Report

The report of the Deanery Synod was accepted. There were no questions.

Rachel had outlined the scope of the Deanery Synod and explained that as a church we were in a very good position in comparison with many of the village parishes where they were struggling with small and ageing membership and a lack of funds. It was important that we support them as best we can.

Freda added that at the last meeting we had been given a pair of sandals to use as part of a project called Holy Ground. She will be looking at working on this after Easter. Rachel has details for anyone interested.

8 Report from the Vacancy Management Group

This was included in the Churchwardens' report.

The Vice Chairman highlighted some of the work of the Ministry Team and thanked them for all they are doing, not just services but the many life events taken care of.

Thanks were also expressed to Mark and Bryan for all they have done over the past year.

9 Hopes for the Future

Caroline had submitted a report which was accepted. She drew attention to the Life-Link Chaplain and asked for prayers as the interviews take place on 31st March.

10 Vision Portfolios including reports of church groups

A Inspiring Faith

There were reports from Altar Servers, Bible-a-month Club, Bible Study Groups, Baptism Ministry, Bell Ringers, Contemplative Prayer Group, GROW Youth Group, Messy Church, Music, Open the book, Prayers for a full ST Mary's, Ponder & Pray, Prayer Chain, Residential Communities, Sunday Kids, Work in Schools and Zoom Morning Prayer.

B Inspiring Hope

There were reports from the Inspiring Hope leader focussing on Remembrance, Just B, Christian Aid, Community Larder, Commercial and Industrial Chaplaincy, Craft Group and Mothers' Union.

C Inspiring Love

There were reports from Church Welcome, Churchyard Angels, Eco Church, Flower Arrangers, Fun, Food & Funds Group and Toast & Toddle.

11 Election of one member to the Deanery Synod to fill a vacancy

There were no nominations. There are currently three (Gerald Altree, Rachel Lewis and Mark Sanderson) out of four possible members who are now in the last of a three year term.

12 Election of twelve members to the Parochial Church Council

Proposed: Bryan Jones

Seconded: John Setchfield

Unanimous

It was resolved to elect twelve members to the Parochial Church Council,

Jean Brown

Paul Cummings

Freda Davies

Mike Donovan

Julian Hallett

Hugh James

Roy Milnes

Anne Morris

Peter Reynolds

Jane Rothery

Alun Thomas

Rosie Winyard.

13 Appointment of Independent Examiner for the Accounts

Roy Milnes had ascertained that David Bennett was prepared to continue as Independent Examiner for the Accounts prior to the meeting. However, he would be retiring next year so this would be his last year.

Proposed: Bryan Jones

Seconded: Roy Milnes

Unanimous

14 Church Hall Report

Peter was pleased to report a healthy bank balance due to many lettings. The report was accepted.

15 Report of the Friends of St Mary's

The Friends were thanked for their support of the fabric of the church. Church members were encouraged to join and forms were available at the back of the church.

The report was accepted

16 Organisations' Reports

Reports from the church's groups had been circulated prior to the meeting. They were noted and accepted.

17 AOB

Bryan Jones expressed his thanks to Mark Sanderson for his pivotal role during the Vacancy. He had worked tirelessly and was directly responsible for much of what has been achieved. Thanks were also given to him for his work on the new platform which was a huge improvement at the front of the nave.

Mike Heylings commented on the quality of the displays at the back of the church – he had not seen anything like them in any other church he had visited. Rachel brought attention to the panel showing how the PCC's donation to a Tanzanian student was being used.

Maragaret Mason asked if the PCC could increase its giving from 5% of its income to 10%. She asked that a date for discussion of this could be made known.

Peter Reynolds thanked the catering team, who provide so much at so many events.

18 Church Hall Report

Peter was pleased to report a healthy bank balance due to many lettings. The report was accepted.

The meeting closed at 7.36pm.

2.3 PCC Treasurer's Report 2025, including the Trustees Report and Accounts

The accounts for 2025, which have been completed on a cash accounting basis continue to show a healthy position, albeit that income from regular giving has reduced, a trend which seems to be continuing this year. The significant unquantified expenditure facing the PCC is the cost of repairs to the tower pinnacles and the spire. We remain hopeful that we will be able to obtain significant grants to help with this.

Last year at the APCM the PCC was asked to consider increasing our giving to other charities from 5% to 10%. However the PCC decided against doing so for two main reasons.

Firstly, the church provides other help to organisations, for example by charging a lower rental fee, (or no charge) for using the church building and there are other collections which are shared or given to charities which are not reflected in the totals shown in the accounts.

Secondly, the church's income from giving represents money paid to it to support its work rather than as a conduit to support other charities. Most people are likely to give separately in addition to their contributions to St. Mary's.

The full report, accounts and Trustees Report are available in a separate document.

Roy Milnes, Treasurer

2.4 Electoral Roll Report for the year 2025

A full revision of the roll took place in 2025.

The cut-off date for members being added to the roll prior to the 2025 Annual Meeting is Sunday 8th March. A report on changes since the 2025 APCM will be given at the meeting.

2.5 Ross PCC Secretary's report for the year ending December 2025

The Trustees' Report gives full details of membership of the PCC.

Seven meetings were held in the year including a brief meeting, immediately following the APCM in March. The Vice Chairman, Peter Reynolds chaired the first three and the Rector chaired the following four meetings.

Town Council – there had been no councillor representation for the closed churchyard at meetings due to the illness and then resignation of Rob Taylor. The Amenities Officer had attended one meeting.

Standing Committee (Chairman, Churchwardens, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) met three times with decisions being ratified by the PCC at the following PCC meeting.

PCC Meetings begin with prayer and/or a reading and the agenda reminds members:

1. **Is what we are thinking of Christian?** In other words, is this in line with the person of Christ and inclusive Christian values?
2. **Is it in line with our Vision?** Because we have a God-given vision.
3. **Who benefits from what we are thinking of?** The powerful, the poor, others, us?

Finance

The treasurer has kept members up to date with accounts and a report at every meeting. Charitable giving for the year was to Enviroability, the Hub and the Horizon Centre.

The scope of work covered during the year

Discussions and decisions can broadly be divided into these categories and full reports on each can be found within these pages.

- **Safeguarding - all PCC members are required to undertake and completed Safeguarding training, all groups using both hall and church were noted and approved by the PCC**
- **Inspiring Hope in the Community** (Paul Cummings)
- **Inspiring Faith in Schools** (Anne Morris) and the **LifeLink Chaplaincy Project** (resulting in the appointment of Emily Goy from July)
- **Church Building** (see churchwardens report)
- **St Mary's Hall** (see Hall committee report)
- **The Open Churchyard** (the process of applying for closure, culminating in December 2025)
- **Inspiring Love** - an eco group was set up to try and reduce the church's carbon footprint
- **Other topics covered included:**
 - Heating in the Rectory
 - Replacing the sink in the church kitchen
 - Peregrines on the tower
 - Introduction of a hardship fund
 - Wye Valley National Landscape Hedgehog sculptures

Bryan Jones has continued in his role as Health & Safety Officer and Jane Rothery as First Aider. Fees and salaries were approved and the process for appointing an assistant administrator was implemented.

The PCC was saddened by the death of Gerald Altree, member of the Deanery Synod and PCC.

Rachel Lewis, PCC Secretary

2.6 Safeguarding and DBS Officer's Report

I am afraid that much of this year's will repeat the sentiments set out in my report for last year's APCM. I cannot emphasise enough the significance the role the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance now plays in the advertising for, recruitment, interviewing and support of volunteers. Group and activity leaders of groups containing children, young people and/or vulnerable adults cannot remain in ignorance of this Guidance and preferably should all complete the on-line training in respect of the same. The days of asking for seemingly suitable members of the congregation to lend a hand are long gone I'm afraid. If volunteers are required a suitably worded advert must be put in the parish newsletter and/or on the website; job and role descriptions have to be created; and supplied; application forms have to be completed and references provided and taken up; interviews (which can be relatively informal) have to be conducted with at least one of the panel having completed the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance; there need to be agreements with and supervision and reviews of the new recruits. Those recruits need to have appropriate DBS certification and complete safeguarding training to the requisite standard. It is daunting and it is tempting to think we can avoid all this - but we cannot if we are to be compliant with the demands of the Diocese and the House of Bishops. It is not enough either to assume that volunteers have the appropriate and current safeguarding training and

DBS certification - checks need to be made to ensure that this is the case. Believe me, I wish that all of this was not necessary, but it is and it is for this reason that, as was the case last year, I am again saying that we should have a designated officer in the Benefice to deal with the recruitment of volunteers. Of course, the advertising, interviewing etc of this officer has to be done in accordance with the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance too. The Diocese will be subject to an audit in 2027 and we do not want to be found lacking.

There has been a change in the procedure for DBS certification in the last year. In 2025 there was a serious breach of data protection protocol by APCS, the agency that was previously used by the Diocese of Hereford. Accordingly, Thirtyone:eight (31.8) has been commissioned to take over the task of providing DBS certification. The system has been changed and now it is possible for the DBS ID Verifier, now called the (Lead) Recruiter to approach 31.8 directly, rather than going through the Diocesan DBS Officer as was formerly the case. We are in the early stages of using 31.8, but it seems to be working efficiently and is producing results much quicker than was the case previously.

We are still doing well with the Parish Dashboard system. There have been occasions where we have moved from green lights to yellow or red , but these have been largely due to unavoidable delays in renewal of DBS certificates and the fact that, during the vacancy, the regular meetings between volunteers and group leaders required by the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance in respect of groups dealing with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults did not take place. Those meetings have now occurred and a pattern of regular meetings has been created.

In October 2025 the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and his Assistant visited and provided safeguarding training, which enabled most people to update their training. It now seems that Domestic Violence safeguarding training would be useful for many of our volunteers and I hope to come to a similar arrangement with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Please note that Lisa Anderson has now been promoted to the role of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and Carl Steventon is returning from sick leave to assume the position of Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. They continue to provide much appreciated support and advice.

Once again, I would like to thank the PCC and all our volunteers for their co-operation and assistance in ensuring that the Benefice remains, for the most part, compliant with the demands of the Diocese and the House of Bishops. The time and effort that it takes to maintain these efforts cannot be underestimated.

Judith Wiggins, DBS and Safeguarding Officer for the Benefice.

2.7 Incumbent's Report

Having arrived in May I can only reflect and comment on the last 7 months of 2025. Nevertheless, I have experienced enough to know that The Ross Parishes are a vibrant, welcoming and faithful group of churches. St Mary's is a busy church on Sundays, but also throughout the entire week both inside and outside of our church building. It has been a pleasure to get to know many of our members within formal and social settings. Throughout my time so far we have made changes and progress within our administration office, Life Link Chaplaincy appointment, held a Churches Together Around Ross (CTAR) Pentecost open air service and celebration, given work experience to three members of diocese potential ordinands and curates, run an advent course, started a twice weekly compline service, appointed a new architect, had new engagement with community outreach for those in times of hardship and also for families experiencing church at Christmas. It is also worth pointing out that much time and energy has already been given to the repair/restoration of the pinnacles and spire. Each parish also needs to remember that I also have a responsibility to Ross, Walford, Brampton Abbots and the Deanery. Across all these areas there has been plenty of successful new developments regarding worship, fabric and community engagement.

I must give a huge thank you to all those that help provide ministry, pastoral care and hospitality within our churches and the wider community. Without you we would not be able to offer the many ways that we show God's love to our town and local area. Both laity and clergy are equally important for a healthy

church, so please believe me that all of you are sincerely valued for your generous efforts. Furthermore, several individuals need a mention of special thanks. Our Church Wardens Mark, Bryan, Gay and Murray always go above and beyond to make sure all is in order. Without the likes of them my job would be impossible. Also, a sincere thank you must go to our ministry team, choir, organists, PCCs, Safeguarding Officer and office staff.

I look forward to the opportunities that 2026 will provide for proclaiming the Gospel and building kingdom values within our benefice and beyond.

Love and blessings in Christ, Kelvin,

The Revd Prebendary Kelvin Price, Rector

2.8 Deanery Synod Report

The Deanery Synod, locally called a “Gathering” is made up of all the clergy and lay representatives from each parish in the Deanery. It was chaired by the Rural Dean, the Revd Sheila Anthony. The Gathering agreed to reduce meetings from four per year to three but in 2025 it only met twice, mainly due to several new clergy being appointed in the deanery and a need for them to get to know each other.

There is an ongoing deanery project to plan a pilgrimage route taking in churches along the Wye from Dixton to Hoarwithy.

Meetings covered a range of topics including

- The Bishop’s Year of Engagement and the purchase of 34 pairs of sandals, one for each church in the Deanery to be used to engage people with the ‘Jesus’ story’.
- The Deanery Pastoral Plan which was adopted and a steering group set up to work out how best to take it forward.
- The Life-Link Chaplain – Emily gave an introduction to herself at the July meeting
- Training opportunities
- Good news, shared by individual parishes

Rachel Lewis

2.9 Inspiring Hope and working in the Community

Over the past year the Inspiring Hope Portfolio has continued to evolve. The focus for the team has been in providing Community Outreach wherever possible, to bring St Mary’s closer to the Town and people of Ross on Wye. This has taken many forms from the amazing work of the Community Larder in reaching those struggling financially to the celebration of National and Local Events within the town.

Specific National events that have been supported this year have included the Town’s celebration of the 80th Anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day. Who can forget the joyous, dynamic and colourful Tea Dance or the Service of Commemoration, which saw almost 400 people crammed into St Mary’s enjoying a dignified but very moving Service of Thanksgiving and the Passing of the Flame of Remembrance to the younger generation. Likewise, Battle of Britain Sunday was commemorated with a special 85th Anniversary Service for Air Cadets and Air Force Officers from across the County. As usual our Remembrance Services have been well planned and executed. Paul Deneen OBE JP DL led the primary Remembrance event on the Prospect and in St Mary’s. St Mary’s did “Remember Them” with great respect and style. St Mary’s have provided an outstanding Chaplain to the Royal British Legion in Canon Freda Davies.

The team from St Mary’s have visited the Community Hospital in Ross on a weekly basis, spreading friendship, advice and support to those in need. In the build up to Christmas our work with both Scouts and Sea Cadets was marked with amazing Christmas Carol Services which were combined with Annual Awards ceremonies. We have supported the amazing young people of the Air Cadets by providing a Chaplain and in the last month a temporary home because of a major disruption to their accommodation.

Paul Cummings

2.10 Inspiring Faith in children and Young People

Life Link Chaplaincy Report

Lots of amazing and encouraging work has been seen throughout this role over the past 8 months. John Kyrle High School has been a warm and welcoming environment to develop this role within the school, Julian (Headteacher) and Kristian (deputy Headteacher) have been nothing but enthusiastic and encouraging of my job and see the impact it is having on the students that I meet with. I have been given the opportunity to share my role within assemblies with years 7-10 which has seen 1 student step out and come and ask me questions regarding faith. I spend a lot of my time doing 1-1s with students but would love to see my role develop into more, with a thriving Christian Union and faith groups and connecting with more students and year groups within the school. I have had the opportunities to attend school trips and be involved in the RE and pastoral departments at the school which have been great and something I would like to see continue throughout my role.

Over this past year I have connected in with 4 of the local primary schools in the area, Walford, Brampton Abbots, Bridstow and Ashfield Park which has really benefited my role in building bridges between the church and the community through the children and young people we have in the area. The impact of this has been seen in my work at John Kyrle with several students in Year 7 recognising me from attending their primary school before the summer last year. I aspire to do the same this year and continue to already connect with students before they attend the secondary school.

At the end of the summer term last year, I attended a number of the local primary schools to present Bibles to Year 3 group and explore the Scripture Union It's your Move resources with the Year 6's to strengthen the link with those students and their families before they moved up to secondary school.

It has been great to see my role as a community linking job and I have spent some time meeting with other local churches in the town to network and see the youth and family support they provide and how my role can support and partner with them.

This new year has also seen growth in my role with a new youth group being started on a Wednesday afternoon for those aged 7 and up. We have between 8-10 young people, mostly from the youth choir group but have seen a few new young people attending which has been really encouraging. This has also been a chance to connect with the families of these young people and showing that my role isn't just in the school but in the church family too. On the 1st Sunday of the month I usually preach an all age talk which has been a real pleasure and joy and the 3rd Sunday I have been supporting a member of the choir to provide a small discussion group for the youth choir during the sermon which has really helped me to get to know the young people and their families within the church.

Emily Goy

Work with Primary Schools and children

Lots of great work has been taking place over the year in our local schools. Open the Book teams have regularly visited Brampton Abbots Church of England and Walford Primary Schools where they share Bible stories with the children through dramatic storytelling. Another Open the Book team, drawn from St Mary's and other local Churches visits Ashfield Park Primary School. Margaret Masons adds "the teams are warmly welcomed as they cast aside their inhibitions to bring alive Bible stories to the children and staff. This is an important and exciting way of spreading the Good News of God's love".

St Mary's hosted Experience Easter in March, with sessions allowing children to explore the Events of Holy Week, and were attended by classes from Walford, Brampton Abbots, Ashfield Park and St Joseph's Primary Schools. It was a tremendous effort by all the volunteers from the Ross Parishes and from our friends from other Ross Churches with really positive feedback from the schools.

Brampton Abbots School came to St Mary's to hold its Easter Service and Walford went to St Michael's and All Angels and were well attended by Parents and friends of the two schools.

Bibles were presented to the Year 3 group at Brampton Abbots School and Kelvin, Emily and I explored the Scripture Union "It's your Move" resources with Year Six Children in the Summer Term to strengthen our connections with them and their families as they moved onto their Secondary Schools.

Harvest was celebrated in both Walford and Brampton Abbots Primary schools with parents and was attended by Members of the Clergy. Oak House Nursery visited St Mary's for their Harvest Festival along with their friends and parents.

During Advent, two Travelling Cribs with knitted figures set off from St Mary's Church on the first Sunday of Advent. One successfully completed its journey around homes with young families connected to St Mary's through Sunday Kids, Youth Choir and Toast and Toddle, strengthening the connections we have with them with some of them joining us at the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. The other Travelling Crib visited the Nurseries and Reception Classes of Walford, Brampton Abbots and Ashfield Park Schools, where it was used to share the Christmas Story with the younger pupils. Both Cribs returned to St Mary's Church where they featured in the Christmas Eve Crib Service.

Members of our congregation were involved in Experience Christmas hosted by the Baptist Church in December which Brampton Abbots, Walford and Ashfield Park Primary schools attended.

The Ross Parishes hosted Christmas Services for John Kyle High School, Brampton Abbots and Ashfield Park Primary Schools and Oak House Nursery School in St Mary's and for Walford School in St. Michael and All Angels' Church, during the run up to Christmas. These were all well attended and enjoyed by parents.

Anne Morris

Sunday Kids

Sunday Kids meets during the 9.30 Service on the second and third Sunday of the month. The sessions run with an average of four to eight children who attend on a regular basis. The children leave the main Service during the first hymn to go into the Children's Room where they have a short Service of Worship and activities based on the Lectionary Readings for the Day. The Children then re-join the main Service in time for Communion and to share their activities with the Congregation.

I would like to thank those people who plan and lead the group, helping to provide this important provision for our youngsters.

Anne Morris

2.11 Inspiring Love through Eco Church

During 2025 we had two visits from Church of England consultants to assess the viability of updating our current heating systems to enable us to achieve closer to net zero by 2030.

The first report reviewed the current heating system and made various recommendations including consideration of ground and air sourced heat pumps in addition to solar panels for the church building in the future.

In April 2025 a second assessment by Ian Hill, Net Zero project manager for the diocese of Hereford made favourable comments about our progress to date with pipe work lagging and PIR sensors, but there was concern expressed about the potential life of existing gas boilers for the church which were now over 15 years old. It was agreed to undertake a cost feasibility study to consider different heating options including a combination of solar panels and air sourced heat pumps in different areas of the building. It was also noted that the next quinquennial inspection of the building is due in 2026. The PCC agreed to the development of a small project group to continue to take this exploratory work forward and a further meeting with external consultants was held in October 2025.

Since then, additional work necessary on the tower has led to the incorporation of these proposals into the overall project work for the church under the direction of the church architect. We will continue to work together to ensure that heating energy efficiency progresses swiftly in line with other building work to minimise costs as far as possible and disruption to the building.

Eco church is linked to the wider work of the Arocha organisation and informed by the Church of

England monthly environment bulletin. This showcases how other churches are moving forward to raise awareness of individual and community responsibilities to achieve net zero. In addition, Herefordshire County Council are consulting on their new Local Nature Recovery Strategy which will include all community action in local areas aimed at reversing the decline of nature and biodiversity in England. St Mary's churchyard and other areas in Ross will be key to piloting initiatives to demonstrate achievements in improving our environment and link work in our local churchyard to the wider government strategic approach. <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/conservation/herefordshire-local-nature-recovery-strategy-lnrs/>

Rosie Winyard

2.15 Organisations' Reports for 2025

Altar Servers

Over the last year, our Altar Servers have continued to support the parish's worship with great commitment. By arriving early to prepare each week and by supporting our ministry team, they make a real difference to the smooth running of our services. The Easter and Christmas seasons can be particularly enjoyable, with additional roles to fulfil and changes in liturgy to learn, from the frantic candle-lighting of Nine Lessons & Carols to the quiet completion of the Maundy Thursday service as the church descends into darkness. The team do so with good humour and a sense of shared purpose. Thanks to everyone who has played a part! We're always glad to hear from anyone who might like to join the rota in the coming year — it's a simple, rewarding and practical way to contribute to the life of the church.

Hugh James

Baptism Ministry

There are three of us involved with the Baptism Ministry, which involves laying-up for the service, assisting during it and clearing away, plus being in contact with the family in the week leading up to the service. We have had a small but steady number of baptisms, mostly in a short and informal service at noon, though occasionally in the 9.30 service. These are always well received which is apparent from the visible relaxation of the families as the service progresses! Hopefully, by giving them a welcoming experience they may be disposed to come again from time to time and see what else we can do!

Helen Setchfield.

Bell Ringers

2025/6 was a year of two halves. Until August everything was going really well. We had a core of loyal ringers and managed to ring for almost all practices and morning services and additional events as requested. The highlight of the year was probably hosting the Guild AGM in May when 80 visitors arrived to enjoy a complete range of ringing, stalls, a mini ring, a productive business meeting and a brilliant lunch. However, in August it all changed; following the discovery of a fault in the pinnacles and spire all bell ringing ceased.

During the year, we replaced the tail ends of the ropes as they had become worn. We also purchased new muffles (used for remembrance ringing). Just before ringing stopped, we had arranged for John Taylor & Company (Bell Foundry) to service the bells to check that they are in good working order and to give us advice on continued maintenance. This obviously had to be cancelled, but I will arrange for Taylor's to visit before we ring again, particularly as they will have been silent for a long time.

There are some outstanding issues regarding health and safety. Firstly, there is a need to install a safety rail in the ringing chamber to reduce the risks incurred crossing the bell frame while conducting maintenance. Secondly, there is a need to examine the wiring and the lighting in the tower. The light emitted from the old fluorescent strip lights is inadequate and the electric cables feeding the lights are very old and have a tendency to fall into the path and tangle with moving ropes. These issues have been raised at previous meetings, but despite reminders, there has been no progress.

It is likely that by the time we are able to ring the Ross bells again, we will need to recruit and train new bellringers. However, we are endeavouring to keep our band together and recently held our AGM in the Mill Race, Walford when twelve members attended. We are still able to ring by collaborating with other local ringers. A number of members support the Weston-under-Penyard group of towers, Goodrich, Mitcheldean, Llangarron and events in the Forest of Dean. A number of us attended the District AGM in Llangarron.

Elizabeth Walker, Tower Captain

Bereavement Support Group

I am so grateful to the wonderful volunteers who help with our bereavement ministry. By visiting or making a phone call to someone recently bereaved can make all the difference. But perhaps it is our monthly 'Just B' meeting at St Mary's that reaches out to more people. There is no time limit on grief so some of those who come are still struggling to come to terms with the loss of a loved one some years ago – others are recently bereaved and appreciate being able to join a group that make no demands on them but give them a safe space to just sit listening or chatting maybe share some anxieties and enjoy a cup of tea and cake in the company of others in the same 'boat' all coping in their own way. Ending with a short service we hope people leave feeling the comfort of God's love.

Several services have been held over the last year which have focused on bereavement and loss: -

- Our annual All Souls Service of commemoration of those who have died was well attended.
- A Carol Service with a difference was held in December for those who felt unable because of bereavement, illness or any other difficulty to join in the regular Carol Service
- I am grateful to our technology team led by Mark Sanderson for enabling many of these and funeral and memorial services to be live streamed. This has ensured that we can provide so much more support and care for people during the darkest and perhaps most difficult times in their lives.

Freda Davies

Bible-A-Month Club

During 2025 the three St Mary's Bible Study groups (two in person at the Leggates, and the third on Zoom) have been able to continue to send £15 each month to provide Bibles to those who long for them, due to war, poverty or persecution all over the world. Regular prayer letters are circulated to let us know how our donations are being used

Janet Nelson, St Mary's, Ross-on-Wye and Bible Society Hereford Action Group.

Bible Study Group

If you are not a member of one of the study groups then you are certainly missing out. We have such fun discussing with people we trust and are able to say "I don't believe this" and "I don't like that" whereas when we are on our own a little voice inside says "Oh! are you betraying Jesus?" and "How dare you be so arrogant".

Well, that is what bible study does for you, confidence to question and think about what is written and know you are not being arrogant or betraying, so come and join us. Three groups, all on a Monday (one on zoom) but I am hopeful that within the parish and the benefice we surely have the capacity to add other days.

So, to report what has gone on. All three groups did the C of E Lent Study "Living Hope".

Then one group did Esther (Jewish lady married to a Gentile) and Ruth (Gentile married to Jewish family) and then Ecclesiastes and are now on Acts.

The other groups are just finishing Acts. Twentyeight chapters, one a fortnight, is a good year's study. As the gospels record Jesus moving from Galilee to Jerusalem and commissioning his disciples to continue from Jerusalem through Judea to the end of the world so Acts records Peter and Paul spreading the gospel to Rome (the hub of the world) with churches being planted on the way.

As Paul Mason reminded us in last year's report we study with two core questions; "What did the passage mean in its context?" and "What does it mean to me today?" and don't be frightened of using the words "to me": the Bible will speak to you individually.

The Revd Colin Leggate

Christian Aid Week 2025

The second week in May was the annual fundraising drive for Christian Aid. The aim is to raise awareness of and help fight poverty throughout the world. The recognisable red envelopes were distributed to parishioners before the Sunday morning service of May 11th. Although many donations are now made online, generous donations of cash and cheques were returned in the envelopes the following Sunday. Including gift aid, £666 were given.

The money collected was to be used to support people in Guatemala, where the climate crisis is ravaging the farms of indigenous communities. Support from the local Christian Aid partner and provision of vital tools, helped teach people how to adapt farming practices to better cope with current conditions.

Giving throughout the year is used by Christian Aid in many critical situations, but this special week of fund raising was designated for the largely forgotten need of Guatemala. We thank everyone who was able to give to this work.

Jean Harrison

Churchyard Angels

The open churchyard has now been officially and legally closed, meaning that no more burials may take place except in family plots. Herefordshire Council are due to take over maintenance of the area in April 2026.

We plan to hand it over in a tidy state with wall repairs and gravestone safety checks having been completed.

The Probation Service volunteers continue to help with maintenance tasks and have done a very good job in 2025. Thanks also to the Garden of Remembrance volunteers and to the Churchyard Angels volunteers who have met once a month (weather permitting).

Dr John Setchfield

Church Welcome

We are pleased to be able to welcome visitors to St Mary's from Monday to Saturday between 11am and 3.30pm with three one and a half hour sessions each day. The numbers of welcomers has increased during the year to 18 people, with volunteers doing anything from one to five sessions per month, some with regular times and others fit in around their other commitments. It is an enjoyable "task", especially rewarding when visitors come in for the first time and are stunned by the beauty and atmosphere of our church – many visitors are on holiday and appreciate the warm welcome we try to give. Some come for peace and quiet and an opportunity to pray while others are interested in the history, services or how the building is used for the community.

Thanks to everyone who helps in this welcoming ministry.

If you would like to join our team of welcomers please or find out more, please get in touch. There is always rooms for another!

Rachel Lewis

Commercial and Industrial Chaplaincy

Last year I had to admit to you all that I was running out of steam and really hadn't done much in this area. I am happier this year to report that there is life in the old dog yet.

In part encouraged by the needs of the Odd Object Competition, all the retail outlets have been visited and then aware of the debilitating effect of the budgets and financial forecasts I have made a good start on the warehouses and factories and am thoroughly enjoying it again.

Do you remember what I am not doing?

I don't conduct a mission to set up prayer groups or try to increase the number of people who come to church on a Sunday morning. Neither am I the spiritual arm of the personnel department dishing out the balm of holiness. Nor am I the lackey of management encouraging workers to be subservient because 'Jesus loves you'!

Do you remember what I am doing?

Listening and encouraging and trying to help people see their jobs as godly. All done from what I believe is the true position of the church; that of weakness. I have no rights of entry, no position of authority, no letters of introduction from government, and no mandate from district rulers, just faith that God is already in the workplace and I am just trying to catch up with him.

The Revd Colin Leggate

Community Food Larder (CTRD)

We continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of the people of Ross and surrounding areas, our shelves are never empty, despite the increase in the number of clients coming to us. The Harvest and Christmas seasons see an increase in donations but our leaner months are January and February. In 2025 we provided 948 parcels for adults and 466 for children. The rise in the cost of living has put severe pressures on day to day living and we noticed an increase in the number of young families needing our help.

Our supermarkets allow collection points for goods and the 'green bag scheme' in Morrisons means we receive the goods we actually need. We also have regular donations through direct debit and from organisations who contact us to know which foods we need.

The gift of Easter eggs and Christmas parcels were well received.

Tea and Toast has continued and our clients value having somewhere warm and dry to meet and talk with their friends as well as receiving advice.

We continue to be grateful to St Mary's for the use of the basement of the Church Hall.

The Larder first opened its doors in 2011, it is a sad reflection of our times that Food Banks are still needed. The future is not looking bright for our clients. Please hold them in your prayers.

Thank you for your support.

Margaret Mason

Contemplative Prayer Group

Meeting usually on the third Wednesday of each month, by focusing in silence on a 'saying' – God's words from scripture - our aim is to develop an increasing awareness of God's message. While this form of silent prayer is not for everyone, the group would be happy to welcome anyone who might like to try this for themselves. Do ask me for more information. The regular meetings are held in my home but as last year there will be a Contemplation for Holy Saturday in St Mary's at 3pm on 4th April in St Mary's.

Freda Davies

Craft at St Mary's

Craft @ St Mary's continues to meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month 10.30 am to 12 noon. We have a very loyal group of crafters who enjoy working on their own projects, drinking coffee, eating biscuits and most importantly chatting. We have just made over 100 angels to decorate our Christmas tree. These have now been given to visitors to the church. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Margaret Mason for assisting me with this activity which is very much appreciated by our members.

Sharn John

Flower Arrangers

Thanks go to those who provide and arrange the flowers that enhance the beauty of our church week by week. The 'Flower Rota Year' begins after Easter and there are still gaps to be filled for this year. We hope that the flowers will last for three weeks and we try to use environmentally friendly flower foam and wherever possible greenery and occasionally flowers from our own gardens. Our numbers have dwindled over the years so please contact me if you can help either by joining the rota or if you would

like to make a donation for flowers this can be left in the parish office or given to Sue Jones who coordinates flower arranging for festivals – Christmas, and Easter etc. and also Flower Festivals so she will be looking for help for the one planned for August 2026.

Freda Davies

Friends of St Mary's

The Friends of St Mary's have continued to support the fabric of the building through fundraising and have brought many exciting events to the church as a result. Chief among these in 2025 was the Open Gardens in May and we are deeply grateful to Wendy and Andrew Leeman for managing that wonderful event for another year. It raised £6,586. This year we were pleased to have attracted attention from *Music in Country Churches* who brought two wonderful concerts to St Mary's during the Open Garden weekend. Wendy and Andrew are going to run the 2027 Open Gardens (their third) but after that would like to hand it on. If you know of anyone who might be willing to take the lead in 2029 we'd love to hear from you and there is the opportunity to work alongside Wendy and Andrew next year. A new departure in 2025 has been the series of free lunchtime talks, which ran alongside the lunchtime concerts, from April to October. These were organised by Bill Fulp (Chair) and benefitted greatly from his wide contacts and interests. The series was sponsored by The Cambridge Journal of Law, Politics and Art which has meant that no costs were incurred.

We continue to enjoy an excellent relationship with Rossiter Books and feel privileged to work with them on the Book Talks that they bring to St Mary's. This is a superb partnership, with mutual benefits all round, and we are grateful to Andy Rossiter and Rustie Baker for it.

We thank all members of the Friends committee, particularly Bill Fulp (chair) and Cameron Hill (treasurer), and all members of the Friends for their ongoing support. More at <https://fosmross.org.uk>

Mark Sanderson, Secretary of the Friends of St Mary's

Fun, Food and Funds Group (FFF)

After initial fears that we would have to cancel events due to lack of support, we raised almost £20,000 during the year in a variety of ways. Our group is made up of Jean Brown, Jane Rothery, Janet Nelson, Pat and Roy Milnes, Jean Brown, Mark Sanderson, Freda Davies and me. Each member brings a different skill to the group and I am grateful to each one for their wonderful contribution to our activities.

We began the year with a presentation on Brazil which included Brazilian food and drink.

Our Lent Challenge was a "count your blessings" but this year had an eco theme aimed at raising awareness of our carbon footprint in everyday life as we paid out more for things we enjoyed which were not green but less for the things where we were considering the environment. Also on an environmental theme, we enjoyed a concert of music written by a local composer about the Wye and including themes of pollution and caring for the countryside.

During the year we held two Come & Sing & Sups, a series of seven summer lunchtime concerts (now a regular fixture in the calendar) and Hereford Police Choir gave another St George's Day Concert.

First Saturday coffee mornings continue to be well supported by both the English and the Welsh, the hundred club isn't quite a hundred but still brings in a useful profit, refreshments and a bar are often requested by others using the church and again leaves us with extra income. H.Art is now an annual event and raises between £3,000 and £4,000, through artists' fees and daily refreshments. The biannual Christmas Tree Festival also took place in 2025 raising a further £6,000.

A new event this year was a Medieval Dance and Supper which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who came. By popular request, we hope to repeat this again in the future.

Thank you to everyone who has helped and supported us in any way. We are always happy to welcome new members to our group and would love to hear your ideas for both social and fundraising events.

Rachel Lewis

Mothers' Union

Membership has fluctuated but with new members, membership is still good. Many members continue to be heavily involved in a variety of church activities, from the Community larder, Toast and Toddle, Open the book and Hospitality.

Sufficient funds were raised to provide posies for Mothering Sunday and to support our Overseas and Crisis Intervention work.

A full programme is organised for the coming year.

Margaret Willis, Branch Leader

Music

Our Youth Choir, which now number 18, sings for the 9.30am Sunday Eucharist on the first and third Sundays of the month, and for other special occasions. Those who were fortunate enough to be at any of the trilogy of carol services the choir has sung this Christmas (Christmas, Epiphany and Candlemas) will know that the Youth Choir was at the heart of these services. <https://rossparishes.uk/youth-choir> . We had a wonderful weekend in St Davids Cathedral last summer – the latest in our series of summer singing weekends. Some members of the Youth Choir, and their families, were a part of this. In 2026 we will be visiting Bristol Cathedral (7th – 9th August).

Twice a month, through the winter months, the adult choir continues to sing a full choral evensong in St Mary's. During the summer months we've been taking choral evensong "out and about" around the deanery. This is happening again, after Easter, in 2026. <https://rossparishes.uk/evensong> .

Our occasional choir, *Round Byrd*, has continued to meet for one Saturday afternoon rehearsal and service each term. This is a very successful enterprise with a mailing list of 120 people. We never see all of those at a single service, of course. <https://rossparishes.uk/round-byrd> .

My sincere thanks to all singers, parents and supporters for making all this possible. But most especially to my wonderful colleague, Adrian Taylor, without whom we certainly would not be able to keep this impressive show on the road.

As a centre for community musical events, we held a second year of free lunchtime concerts – "First Wednesdays @ 1" and we have a full programme for 2026. <https://rossparishes.uk/lunchtime-concerts> We added a sister series of lunchtime talks in 2025 on the third Wednesdays. It was a privilege to have been hunted out by *Music in Country Churches* and to host two concerts for them alongside our Friends of St Mary's Open Gardens Weekend in June. And a very full programme of other musical events has taken place through the year.

Mark Sanderson, Director of Music

Prayers for a full St Mary's

Prayers have continued to be said in church (usually the Markye chapel) at 12 noon on the first Monday of every month for the fulfilment of a vision received nearly 20 years ago of a full church for every main service. We are encouraged to note that average congregation numbers seem to be increasing and we are occasionally joined in prayer by one or two others, although we would be glad of more members of the congregation to join us on a regular or ad hoc basis.

Janet & Nick Nelson

Ponder and Pray

The Ponder and Pray group meets on zoom twice a month on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays from around 11-15am. Focusing on a particular issue or passages of scripture we 'ponder' on its relevance in our own lives, share our ideas and spend time in prayer and contemplation. Occasionally, we step out of our boxes and enjoy lunch together or visit a place of interest.

We very much value being able to meet via zoom and are grateful to Mark Sanderson for maintaining our link and for his valued assistance when any technical problems arise.

Do contact me if you are interested in learning more about joining this group.

Freda Davies

Prayer Chain

From time to time we are asked to pray for people who would prefer their request not to be made public. These requests are passed on to members of the Prayer Chain to be included in their private prayer. As co-ordinator of the Prayer Chain I would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in being part of this and am always happy to pass on requests for prayer ensuring requests are dealt with sensitively and always maintaining confidentiality.

Freda Davies

Residential Communities

We continue three types of work with the residential communities during the past year. The most intensive effort has been with the 42 residents of Westbank, most of whom are on a dementia pathway, but we have also established a similar pattern with the smaller Rosedale community with whom we have occasional communion services, The aim is to hold a monthly celebratory service with Mary Brigg accompanying the several hymns we integrate into the programme at Westbank, and Rosedale. All services are now crafted with Alzheimer's Society principles in place marked by music replacing many traditionally said elements of the liturgy, and by narrative rather than conceptual sermon content. There is also a monthly quiet communion at Westbank and we have continued a monthly further communion with 'all age' Sunday streamed services from St Mary's. Both homes had carol activities, and Christmas and Easter 'big' services strengthened by the presence of our young people. My thanks to Sue Jones, Jane Rothery, Mary Philipps and Mary Brigg who offer invaluable help with the activities and one to one work with these communities who readily appreciate our involvement. We work in a different way with varied monthly services at Goodrich Court, Woodside, Bernard Hackett Court and Ross Court, organised by Canon Freda Davies and staffed by Readers and Lay Missioners. During the past year the total monthly attendance in residential situations is about one hundred and thirty people. Paul Cummings and Jane Rothery maintain a weekly chaplaincy visit to Ross Community Hospital although repeated infection bouts have continued to affect the continuity of these visits from time to time. I remain 'on call' for individual requests for chaplaincy ministry.

We held a monthly Tea and Talk session in St. Mary's for dementia carers but ,as this gained strength, it was decided to integrate with our Dementia Matters Ross Centre friends at Tudorville. We aim to strengthen our Dementia Awareness planning of services with Churches Together in Ross and District for whom we continue to organise an annual awareness service, and we are currently investigating the implications of being a 'Sight Friendly Church'. We would welcome additional help for individual resident support should you feel so moved.

Derek Glover

St Mary's Hall Report

The Hall is on a sound financial footing, and we have been able to make some investments this year which will, in the long term, reduce our costs.

We continue to host 'Turning Point' in the upstairs office suite, and it is their rent which underpins our financial situation.

Rentals of the main Hall are buoyant, so much so that there are no weekday evenings available for Church activities, which we may have to address in the future.

Our main investment has been the installation of double glazing on the main hall windows. This has without doubt improved heat retention, and hopefully reduced expenditure on heating, but we do not have sufficient data yet to confirm this. We are considering adding double glazing upstairs as well. We have also repainted the blue lower half of the main hall which has freshened the ambience. The entrance hall will also be repainted soon.

Following the sad passing of Gerald Atree, who has been a stalwart member of the committee for many years, we need at least one new committee member. We meet bi-monthly, and occasionally need to action projects between meetings, so not an onerous load. If you feel you could help, please talk to Peter Reynolds or Margaret Mason.

Peter Reynolds, Hall Committee Chair

Sidespersons

Thanks to the team of around 30 who have welcomed people to almost all the main services at St Mary's throughout 2025. As well as the traditional sidespersons, the welcomers outside the church door at the 9.30 a.m. services are much appreciated, especially by visitors and newcomers.

We have lost several members of the team during the year, notably Mrs Susan Jenkins who died in May. Others who had been valued members of the team in years past and for whom we give thanks are Gerald Aintree, Jean Spencer and Sylvia Greer. Thanks to Gill and Geoff Tipton who have resigned for health reasons and to Anne and Victor Downing, eager volunteers for welcoming at the door when it was introduced but who have also had to resign for health reasons.

Very occasionally it is difficult to find someone who is available for a particular service. It would be lovely to hear from some more volunteers.

The pattern of holding private services for Baptisms continues, and members of our team regard it as a privilege to be able to welcome new members of the church and their families on these occasions, which usually take place at midday. Thanks are extended to members of the 9.30 a.m. congregation who willingly assist with moving the chairs to provide an appropriate setting for these significant family events.

Current Sidespersons List

Mrs Val Benyon	Mrs Sally Beswick	Mrs Sue Clerk
Mr Martin Clerk	Mr Paul Cummings	Mr Julian Hallett
Mrs Jean Harrison	Mrs Judith Hazelton	Mr William Hazelton
Mrs Teresa Hough	Mrs Anne Hughes	Mr David Hughes
Mr David Jenkins	Mr Peter Jenkins	Mrs Judith Landau
Mrs Sarah McGilveray	Mrs Pat Milnes	Mr Roy Milnes
Mrs Janet Nelson	Mr Nick Nelson	Ms Anne Remmington
Mrs Marilyn Reynolds	Mr Peter Reynolds	Mrs Susan Ryan
Mr Bob Ryan	Mrs Ann Stirrup	Mr Alun Thomas
Mrs Helen Wynn	Mrs Margaret Willis	

The people listed above have indicated willingness to serve as sidespersons during the next year.

Janet Nelson

Toast and Toddle - Toddler Group

Toast and Toddle continues to attract young families. Most weeks we have a good turnout and some weeks are very busy indeed! In half-term weeks and the first weeks of each longer holiday we encourage older siblings to come along, and sometimes some of our mums whose children are now all at school come along just to say hi and have a coffee, which is lovely. We have mums, grandparents, carers and quite a few dads too coming along with their little ones. Our sessions are unstructured, simply offering relaxation for the adults, play for the children and refreshment for all. We do not openly evangelise but we do encourage the families to sign up for the Travelling Crib during Advent, to help decorate our T&T tree at Christmas Tree Festivals and to come along to the Crib Service - and we have a good take-up for all of these. Two of our mums come regularly to 9.30 and during the year one of 'our' babies was baptised at this service with quite a few Toast families coming along to support this. While I am the nominal head of T&T and write these reports, in reality this group owes its existence and success to our loyal and lovely group of Toasters who provide love, laughter and hard work at all times. My huge thanks to them all.

Helen Setchfield