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Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2018-19

This review has been compiled for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to reflect the passion, enthusiasm and dedication within the three churches and in the various groups and committees and so provide a flavour of activities throughout the Parish.

*Lisa Brook
PCC Secretary*

St James' Church, Sewards End

St James has had another fruitful year led by Rev'd Canon Jenny Tomlinson and underpinned by twice monthly services of Holy Communion and Morning Praise. New events were introduced alongside our traditional annual celebrations.

The committee met four times during the year and we are grateful to our Deputy Wardens, Mike Dean and Keith Willey for their continued faithful service in that role.

The church was full as we celebrated Pentecost with Choral Evensong led by St Mary's Choir and with Archdeacon Robin King as our preacher.

Our regular coffee mornings continued in the Village Hall; their success led to us trying out a Café Church format for a service in June. Starting with coffee, croissants and the Sunday papers, around 20 people reflected on the troubling and happy news in the world, and how our faith impacts on our response. We enjoyed the more informal setting with a chance for discussion as well as worship and repeated it in January 2019.

In October, Colonel Joe Hordern was the speaker at our Harvest Supper on his "life as a Christian soldier". We sold out for this very popular evening and Joe's subject was particularly appropriate in the run-up to the centenary of the Armistice. In this special year, the regular Act of Remembrance in the church garden was enhanced by the presence of serving soldiers from Carver Barracks, the reading out of the names of villagers who had died in the war by a teenager from the village



St James Sewards End 11 Nov 2018
Photo Gordon Ridgwell

today. Silhouettes of “Tommies” were placed in the church and garden as part of the “There but not there” national remembrance project.



We received an unexpected donation of nearly £1500 from the sale of footballing ephemera that had belonged to Jack Martin – a regular member of the church until his death in 1987. We plan to put this towards replacing the East End windows and the Diocesan glass expert has provided advice.

We made grants of £750 to church, local and international charities as well as donating the proceeds of special collections at Harvest and Christmas to the Uttlesford Foodbank and the Children’s Society respectively.

We were also pleased to make a contribution of £500 towards the costs of youth work at St Mary’s in recognition of Matt Williamson’s inspired leadership of the village youth club. This currently attracts a lively group of 10 to 14 year olds who enjoy games and chat each month.

The quinquennial inspection revealed no major problems and the recommended repair work was carried out promptly. In addition, the remembrance memorial was refurbished in preparation for Armistice Day.

We were sad to lose Sarah Rumsey and Charles Ractliff from the congregation this year and remember their lives with thanks.

Finally, a huge thank you to Jenny for her ministry, leadership and care of us all over the past year.

Judith Hasler

Secretary, St James Church Committee

St John’s Church, Little Walden

Our annual general meeting was held on the 8th April and signified the start of another year for St John’s Church. A new committee was formed and we said farewell to Ann Naylor and thanked her for all her hard work over the years and we welcomed a new member in Gilly Hayes who I’m sure will prove to be an asset to the committee. We also welcomed back Kate Beare and Julia Chapman. Unfortunately for the third year running a second Deputy

Warden did not step forward to fill our vacancy but we hope and pray that this situation will be resolved.

Numerous work has been carried out to further improve the fabric of the building including: the inscribing of the twelve purchased pew bibles, thank you Kate Beare, the erection of a new front fence, thanks go to Dave Beare and David Nash for your hard work plus other work that was carried out at the spring working party. This included cleaning and re-securing the gutter brush that had been blown off during the late winter storms, cleaning moss and algae off of the two front outdoor benches and from the newly repaired porch, the prep and repainting of the boiler room door, the front gate iron work and the tidying up of the inside activity areas in the western corners of the Church.

A Diocesan inspection was carried out on the 4th May'18 with plenty of positive comments received with only one negative in that St John's Church does not have an up to date list of contents, this has now been rectified with a full pictorial list of contents identified and noted.

The two-yearly inspection of the Church windows was carried out with few maintenance issues reported, a quarry tile was replaced, all hoppers checked, and functioning and the window channels and discharge tubes were cleared of debris.

Our finances have been stretched supporting our three-year maintenance program and whilst a grant was received, in 2017, a further £1,000 was received from the Freemasons of Saffron Walden with sincere thanks.

The made to measure LPG cage was delivered and the allowance for the feed pipe to the heater on the north west wall was a few millimetres out. A local Gas-Safe company was located, (Saffron Services), their quote was accepted to move the pipe, the cheapest option, and the work was completed and heating tested successfully. Sometimes unexpected benefits can arise when least expected as Saffron Services also secured the LPG frame to the rear wall, sturdily enough to be acceptable with no further wooden battening and infills required and additionally provided a cheaper quote for the annual servicing of the two LPG fed gas heaters due in April'19.

As part of our preventative maintenance, Palmer Roofing inspected and rectified, the main roof of any slipped, missing and

damaged tiles prior to the onset of winter. The half yearly inspection of the church was carried out on the 28th September with only a few minor problems identified which included the lists for first aiders that were out of date and a decision to organise a PAT test for electrical items to be deferred until October 2019. In anticipation of the inspection and before the FST service on the 12th August a reminder of the fire evacuation procedure was read out in order to comply with current health and safety procedures.

On the pastoral side our efforts included special services such as Harvest Festival, with David Tomlinson officiating, followed by lunch and an auction with a significant amount of money raised for our two nominated charities. An act of Remembrance service was held on the village green and it was pleasing to see so many attendees, both our regular church goers and many from the village coming together to listen, meditate and join in this special service of remembrance. Our usual, very well attended annual Christmas Carols service was deemed a huge success yet again with no standing room to be found for any late comers.

Our giving has been generous with special collections and donations to support the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Self-Help Africa, Farm Community Network, Refugee Action and Medecins Sans Frontieres.

On the 30th September St John's hosted its first ever Forest Church service involving local churches in and around Saffron Walden, we hope that this can continue as an annual event.

Richard Peet
Deputy Warden

Worship Committee

Due to the variation in time of the Annual Church Meeting, the Worship Committee has only met once since the 2018 report was drawn up. Membership of the Committee includes the Rector and both Churchwardens (Denis Tindley and Gill Caswell) plus Rachel Prior, Mile Felgate, Oliver King, Jenny Kirkaldy and Bron Ferland.

Looking at past services, it was agreed that since not everyone can participate in the procession on Palm Sunday and it is hard to keep the singing in and out of the church together we should desist from having one.

It was felt that a third Tree Service on Christmas Eve would be hard to squeeze into the afternoon, given the length of the current services. It was decided to see if having the deputy mayor and their consort in addition to the mayor and their consort, would speed up the reception of the gifts before revisiting this at a future meeting.

The Celebrate service continues to evolve. The church school now invites children from any class to meet with Tim Hardingham or Rachel Prior over a lunch break to prepare each service, with the result that it is now largely only children with families already affiliated to the church who take part. It had previously been a strength of the occasion that we were able to welcome new families to the church. There is now a termly service with representation from the school and Joyful Noise at each.

Thursday Praise has stopped for the time being.

A new venture this past year was Forest Church, a venture arising from a vision day held at Little Walden. The service was held in September in woods at Swards End and will be reviewed at the next meeting. There are plans for another one this May.

The Taize services were reviewed and it was suggested that the North Chapel might be a more intimate and appropriate space rather than the front of the church. This will be trialled at the next opportunity. The committee heard the plans for Good Friday's devotional offering using Bob Chilcott's *St John Passion*, which includes some congregational hymns. These will be incorporated into the Lent services this year.

As always, the committee recognizes the rich variety of worship offered, which seeks to involve both our regular worshippers and those members of the local community who may only attend once or twice during the year.

Bron Ferland

Secretary, Worship Committee

Baptism Team

I am happy to report that 29 babies/children were baptised at St Mary's in the past year. Sadly, this is something of a decrease compared to the preceding year (2017: 43, including three adults), but there are things to celebrate. In the past year, nine couples who were married at St Mary's have brought their children to be baptised here, including three couples who do not live in Saffron Walden.

And 2019 has started well with 10 baptisms booked for the early months of the year.

The midday service continues to be the preferred one, with just three baptisms within the 10am service. 29th July proved to be the busiest Sunday of the year, with three baptisms at midday and one at 1pm.

Rachel officiated at her first baptism service at the end of March and what a wonderful baptism service it was! She and David are now sharing the baptisms and the preparation meetings for parents, and godparents too if they would like to attend, between them.

During the early part of 2018, while building work was taking place in the south-west corner of our church, baptisms took place in the nave. Since May we have been able to use the font again and, thanks to the repositioning of the font steps, the family and friends invited to baptisms are afforded a far better view of the baptism.

The baptism team in its current format has now been looking after baptism families for 10 years. We continue to visit families who make enquiries about having their children baptised and generally assist them through the baptism process, until the presentation of their children's certificates. Most of us, namely Diana Golding, Sandra Marsh, Pamela Mugliston, Noel Starr and myself are original members (Kathryn Bennett having joined us three years ago), for which I thank you all. Bill Rose, another original member,



has decided to stand down this year, largely because of his increased involvement in the Men's programme. I am immensely grateful to Bill for all his support over the years, for his wonderfully detailed reports on the visits he has made and for doing the handprint board in time for Mothering Sunday for several years now.

I am also grateful to Jenny Cottam for keeping the registers, writing the certificates (there is no limit to the number of godparents

a child can have!) and giving me gentle reminders from time to time. Also, thanks go to all those of you who move chairs, hand out order of service sheets etc. at baptism services, and to makers of teddy bears and their labels. This is a team effort!

Lesley Lancaster

The Guild of the Holy Trinity

The Guild of Servers at St Mary's, in existence for many years, continues to fulfil an important role in the liturgy of St Mary's. The Servers, with increasing experience, carry out duties of increasing importance. Traditionally, one begins as a Taperer, progress to being a Crucifer and, when licensed by the Bishop, may serve as a Sub-Deacon and administer the chalice. We, the Servers, are conscious that, in assisting the priest at the Altar, we are also leading you, the congregation in worship.

Occasionally, at festivals, we have a Crucifer and two Taperers but we still have not reached the situation where we can provide a Crucifer and two Taperers every Sunday. In addition to leading the clergy procession and choir, if in attendance, the Crucifer and Taperers accept the Communion elements and the Alms from the Offertory Procession. The range of tasks performed by servers within the ritual of Holy Communion is contained in a small pocket booklet '*Notes for serving at the Altar*' which is given to each server.

Currently, the Guild includes four Sub-Deacons who serve in turn at the 8am (1662) Holy Communion. A bigger group provide a team of a Team Leader, two Sub-Deacons and a Crucifer at the 10am Eucharist. This 10am Sub-Deacon Group has thirteen regular members. At this service the Sub-deacons administer two chalices at the main Altar with a third accompanying a second Priest, Deacon or Ordinand to offer the chalice at the additional station in the South Chapel. On occasion, if there is no second priest, we need to call upon a fourth Sub-Deacon to administer in the South Chapel. This can also happen when we are under pressure at festivals and holiday times.

There are also a number of Lay Assistants who do not serve in Communion services in the Church but who are licensed by the Bishop to give Holy Communion within the community to the sick and housebound. They have agreed, if needed in an emergency, to administer the chalice in church. St John, Little Walden and St

James, Seward's End also have Lay Assistants licensed to administer the chalice.

Even though the list of servers seems long, many of us also have other duties and responsibilities, as Wardens, Welcomers or Sidesmen, or in other churches. We have also lost, in the last year, two long serving and experienced servers who have moved away from Saffron Walden and it is sometimes difficult to provide a full team. If you are interested in assisting in worship by serving at the Altar, or becoming a Lay Assistant, then please have a word with the Rector or myself. We are happy to welcome new members.

Noel Starr

Welcome Teams

When you arrive at a Sunday service or a special service what are your first impressions? Hopefully it is one of being welcomed into the church by one or more of our Sidesman or as they are more commonly known these days by one of our Welcomers.

But what is a Sidesman? Under Church of England rules, a Sidesman is by law elected to promote the cause of true religion, in the parish, and to assist the Churchwardens in the discharge of their duties. A Sidesman therefore carries a responsible position and is vested with the appropriate authority to carry out these duties and each Sidesman will take a personal responsibility to welcome any visitor to our church.

All of our Sidesman are volunteers, members of the church whose names are on the electoral role, adult men and women, of all ages, who give up their free time to support our church at various times of the day and evening and not just on Sundays but during the week as well.

We are blessed, at St Mary's, to worship in a large, historic and thriving church catering in traditional and modern services at various times, mainly on a Sunday, when we have regular teams covering the 8am, the 10am and afternoon services.

But what happens at the special services held throughout the liturgical year? Did you know that Sidesman supported 21 services during 2017–2018 starting with the All Souls and Remembrance Day services on the 5th and 12th November respectively and finished with Corpus Christi on the 31st May'18 and by the time you read this we will have already supported 19 services during 2018–2019 up to and including the April Easter services! To cover these

special services we have ten co-ordinators and thirty-six additional, authorised Sidesman. Some of these services will only require a couple of Sidesman but others, like the Christingle and Advent carol services, can require as many as fifteen Sidemen some of whom are trained to use the fire extinguishers placed around St Mary's church and also are knowledgeable in the location and use of the numerous light switches which play an essential part in these services.

As you can imagine these services require some logistical support starting from the quarterly service rotas that identify the planned special services, the times and dates and to ascertaining whether Sidesman are required, and how many will be required. A request is then sent out, (the majority by email but some by phone), for volunteers and hoping that enough Sidesman reply volunteering their services. Once a team has been identified the list is passed to the Churchwardens advising them the assembled team names.

So please when you are next visiting St Mary's and you are greeted by a welcoming smile, your service sheets and *The Grapevine* already prepared for you or you have a question answered or you require a helping hand to your seat or indeed helped in any other way just think and appreciate what St Mary's would be like without the help and assistance of our Sidesman, I know I do.

*Richard Peet, St Mary's Church
Welcome Teams Co-ordinator.*

Music

Conductors have long documented the need for a strong structure within any choir or orchestra. Discipline and motivation in their various forms are crucial attributes of any musician, conductor and indeed healthy organisation. Choir training in many ways is akin to class teaching. The trainer needs to have a clear sense of vision at all times as to exactly what is required, and how to achieve it. St Mary's continues to be home to a vibrant Christian community, and I for one, am proud that music plays its part in this bigger picture.

There are numerous services and events over course of the year, and the choirs, bands, and musicians all work tirelessly to bring together the highest possible standards in order to fulfil God's work. Sometimes the adult choir, especially, have to contend with a large amount of repertoire in a tight time frame at peak times of year. It is

worth remembering that all parts of the choir and brass group are non-auditioned, and this invariably means that music making for some will prove more challenging, though hopefully no less stimulating, than for others. My first thanks therefore go to all singers and instrumentalists for their continued commitment and love of music making week-in-week-out throughout the year.

Numbers in the adult choir remain very healthy and we currently have a small waiting list. We are still slightly short in the adult bass department, though I am confident that one or two of our older Junior Choir members will soon graduate to the back benches. We were sorry to lose Christine and Lesley but welcomed Hannah, Ellie, Susie (ex-choral scholars) and Cecelia into the adult choir. Both Christine and Lesley contributed an enormous amount over the years and they will be much missed.

The Junior Choir is also at capacity and running a short waiting list. They continue to work well together and we have introduced a new team leader structure which is helping significantly with choir management.

Kate Beare sadly stood down from Joyful Noise at the end of the 2018 and we are indebted to her for her drive in establishing and maintaining this choir. They have simply flourished under Kate's leadership. I am pleased that Ann Cass is successfully starting to build on Kate's good work and is leading Joyful Noise into the next exciting chapter of its mission. We are particularly in need of additional helpers for this choir – so please spread the word.

Brass group numbers have remained stable and we continue to bring in one or two additional players when required. We are, however, always on the look-out for new players! Could it be time to dust off that old sousaphone in the attic? They remain a close-knit group and played for a number of events such as the Easter Day service, Fête de la Musique, the Debden Garden Party, Christmas Fair and Carol Service. My thanks go to Graham Cottam for his continued hard work in organising this group.

I am thrilled that Elliot, our first Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar has made such a strong start to the scholarship. He is beginning to make a fantastic contribution to our musical life. With unanimous agreement from all parties, we have asked Elliot to stay on for a second year.

It is pleasing to see that the choral scholars continue to contribute so well to the musical life at church, and I am grateful for Noel for his mentorship of this scheme. It is particularly good that they are such a close-knit group at present. Numbers are modest at present having sadly lost a scholar earlier in the year due to circumstances beyond our control. Numbers will undoubtedly rise in due course as the next generation of Juniors reach the age for eligibility to the scheme.

Musically speaking, it has been a terrific and busy year. Space unfortunately precludes a blow-by-blow account of events and services, so I will therefore pick out some highlights: The Devotional Offering last Easter featured a new and particularly beautiful arrangement of the *Requiem* by Faure, which was scored for harp, violin, cello and organ. We also sang '*Stabat Mater*' by Rheinberger - a contemplative, though no less powerful work. Another particular highlight was the whole choir visit to Guildford Cathedral last April. This is always a great day out and my thanks go to Peter and Caroline for organising this. In June we held a successful *Come and Sing: Duruffe Requiem* which was well attended by singers and also by the audience who came at the end of the day to hear the culmination of the afternoon's efforts. In November, we marked the centenary of the end of WW1 by holding a second devotional offering. Repertoire included a range of secular and sacred music, alongside the *Messiah Part 3* by Handel. This required an enormous amount of extra work from the choir, and it is testament once again to their motivation and goodwill that we were able to successfully pull this off at such a demanding time of year. It would be true to say that preparation for Advent and Christmas ran concurrently with Remembrance and All Souls this year, therefore making for a somewhat eclectic mix of repertoire at the Friday night choir practice! Junior Chorister parent and local musician Philip Sunderland wrote a substantial and profound work entitled '*Advent Calendar*' which was premièred at the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Philip has also played the organ for a small number of significant services and makes a welcome addition to the team.

During the year the SMMA committee organised a successful series of lunchtime concerts and an occasional series of evening organ recitals. We were also pleased to host a concert given by three budding organists from St John's College School, Cambridge and also to repeat the successful schools event offering an

introduction to the organ as an instrument to over 200 Year 3 pupils from four of our local primary schools.

As mentioned earlier, the support structure for all of the music making comes down to a lot of hard work from a number of people: the kind folks on the SMMA committee do a huge amount and I remain extremely grateful for the role that this group performs within our church circle. Our librarians Hilary Parry-Jones and Margaret Jacobs work tirelessly sorting out mountains of music, not to mention shaking the odd chorister upside down for that missing copy of the Hallelujah Chorus. Peter De Vile continues to maintain the organ with such dedication and love. Given the size and age of this instrument, this is no small task. My right-hand man Jeremy Allen continues to play with expertise and is a kind and wise source of advice and information. My enormous thanks go Bron Ferland who works tremendously hard in ensuring that our musical infrastructure continues to thrive and move forward. Lastly, to David Tomlinson for his profound support and wisdom over the year. Thank you all.

Oliver King

Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers

There is a long and distinguished history of bell ringing at St Mary's which continues to be a significant aspect of church life and Christian ministry today. The tower contains a fine peal of 12 bells, the earliest bell dating from 1797 when a new ring of eight bells was installed cast by John Bryant of Hertford. In 1914 the bells were augmented to a ring of twelve and the last restoration was in 1962 when the entire ring was retuned and hung in a new iron frame. Although the present bells can only be dated back to the time of the 1790s restoration, there are records that there were bells in the church from the early 1400s.

The main focus of the Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers is to call people to worship and enhance the presence of the Church in the town. The bells have been rung every Sunday throughout the year, for major festivals in the Christian calendar, for weddings and funerals, and for both national occasions and local events. Teaching new ringers and continuation training of existing ringers is an essential activity of the Society and, to that end, we hold a weekly 'practice night' each Tuesday and engage in other training

using our ringing simulator for both our own ringers and ringers from many towers in the surrounding area.

The highpoint of our ringing calendar is always 'Great Ringing Day' which is usually held on the last Saturday of June; this is a tradition stemming back to 1623 with the death and bequest of Thomas Turner, who directed in his will that 33s 4d should be bestowed on the ringers each year to ring the bells on the anniversary of the day he was buried. Great Ringing Day is a major ringing and social event and this year members of the Society and ringers from nearby churches took part in general ringing and quarter peals at Arkesden, Ashdon, Hadstock, Ickleton, Littlebury, Radwinter, Rickling, and Saffron Walden.

One of the highlights of the year was entering a band in the new 12 bell competition between towers in Essex and Suffolk, the George Pipe Trophy, held at St Edmundsbury Cathedral on 17 February. Also, the Saffron Walden band were placed first in the NW Essex District Striking Competition held at Thaxted on 12 May and were placed 7th at the Essex Association finals held at Great Totham on 14 July.

On 16 September we took part in the national *Heritage Open Day* and opened the tower to visitors to give an insight into English-style bell ringing. Also in September we held our annual outing visiting churches in the Southend-on-Sea area. The 100th Anniversary of the end of WW1 was commemorated by ringing on Remembrance Sunday and a special peal (5,056 changes lasting 3 hours and 13 minutes) was rung the previous day in memory of all those from Saffron Walden who lost their lives in WW1.

Christmas is a particularly busy time for us and this year, in addition to festive ringing, we opened the tower for visitors to the Christmas Fair and held our Christmas dinner at The Crown, Little Walden.

Any members of the Church who would like to see the bell ringing or 'have a go' are most welcome to come up the tower to see what goes on.

Stephen Wood, Ringing Master

Church Flowers

Each week flowers are placed in the church, with the exception of Advent and Lent. The flowers are welcoming to our many visitors and enhance the services.

This year flowers were placed on the chancel steps for Bishop Derek's funeral.

I am happy to say that we have gained one new member of the flower team, but one member has moved away.

During the year we were asked to provide flowers for a number of weddings, and a big 'thank you' to Jane Knight for taking on this task which has helped lessen my workload.

Exciting news for this year as we are to have a flower festival over the August Bank Holiday in aid of the Building Fund. The theme will be 'Saints'.

I would like to thank the team for their loyalty and the fellowship we share when 'doing the flowers'.

New members are needed and help would be given. Men, do not be shy in coming forward to join us.

Pam Russell

Sewing Group

The Sewing Group continues to have an enthusiastic membership and to work away on the ever-increasing tide of kneelers very happily and also for the handicraft stall for the Christmas Fayre. Any new ideas for things to make for that would be very gratefully accepted.

Tessa Hawkes

Sunday Morning Car Service

The *Sunday Morning Lifts to Church* has been running for many years and in several formats. This service has been put in place for members of the congregation who find it difficult to get to the 10am service and is taken advantage of by several people either on a regular or random basis.

A church mobile phone number 07582 514741 is manned, usually by Carolyn Mann, on Saturdays from 4.30pm to 6.00pm for those who wish to book a lift to church the following morning. If it needs to be cancelled the next day a call between 8am and 9am is appreciated

We run this service with volunteer drivers by rota, currently on a five-week basis, two drivers each week. Several of our drivers also take part in the service on Sunday mornings as servers, welcoming or tea and coffee making so we are always looking for other drivers to volunteer to help with driving regularly.

If you wish to join our team of drivers, need a lift to church or know of someone who could use the service please call Carolyn Mann 01799 500311 or Keith Huddleston 01799 525275

Carolyn Mann

Prayer Team

The start of the year was quiet and we spent time in prayer together for a few evenings. Our first event was on a cold rainy day in March when David led a Quiet Morning in the Parish Rooms on "*Living the Eucharist in our Daily Lives*". He opened up the liturgy of the Eucharist and its application to living it out in our ordinary day to day lives, finishing off with a Eucharist which had more depth because of what we were reflecting with over the morning. It was inspiring, challenging and at the same time very accessible bringing the Eucharist alive and giving it new meaning. We all went away glad that we had come and I believe more aware of the depth and width of the Eucharistic life.

Thy Kingdom Come: a week of prayer between Ascension Day and Pentecost (The Archbishop of Canterbury initiative). This is the second year we have been involved in it. This difference this year was that we were supporting Rachel who led it; with Matt bringing his huge experience of working with young of all ages meant that those from the prayer team felt hugely excited in being involved with it all. Between Easter and Ascension we also had 4 evenings where we met to pray for an hour in the servery area. These evenings were faithfully attended and I believe underpinned the work of *Thy Kingdom Come* as well as providing some rich evenings of prayer. *For Thy Kingdom Come* several prayer stations were created around the church all of them hugely creative. Each class at St Mary's Primary School came on the Friday after Ascension Day and seemed to really engage with the stations, went back to tell their parents so the word spread and Rachel received really positive and encouraging feed- back. In addition to this, many visitors also seemed to engage with the prayer stations. All in all, I believe it contributed to the Pentecost family service becoming such a joyous celebration. We are once again supporting and joining in with it this year, where Rachel has already started to invite other schools and groups to participate.

We have had a year of Evening Prayer each Tuesdays with fluctuating numbers attending but it only needs a few of us to pray!

The highlight has been praying every Tuesday with the intercessions left on the prayer board and then each of us taking away the prayer requests to pray with during the week.

We finished the year off with a wonderful Quiet Morning led by Rachel exploring the joy of Mary and Elizabeth when both their lives were turned upside down neither turning out as expected. This again was another rich morning making us reflect and challenging us to see God in all situations even the ones that confuse us.... I think this in turn broadened our vision of God's love and challenged us to risk going beyond our well-known patterns of life.

Throughout the year the Prayer Diary has been overseen by Joe Hordern. This is the first year that we have been restricted in publication of the names in many posts. We have decided to continue with the annual publication after the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, when key appointments are made. May I encourage us all to continue to pray with the Diary as it can only help the work and ministry of the church as well as involving us at a deeper level in the church community.

We had to say a sad goodbye to Margaret Taylor who has been such a rock in this team throughout many, many years. We will miss her, her energy and friendship to us all as well as her wisdom and vast experience. We are delighted to be also welcoming Hazel Colebrooke who brings a whole variety of experience, groundedness and enthusiasm. Thank You for joining us Hazel!

Sue Walker

Julian Group

Due to the simplicity of the Julian Meetings there is really nothing new to report.

There continues to be a gathering of strong "core members" who meet on the second Tuesday of the month as ever, at 7.30 pm at *The Priory*, Common Hill. Newcomers welcome.

Tessa Hawkes

Coffee, Cake and Company

We continue to welcome well known faces as well as new ones at Coffee, Cake & Company on the third Sunday of every month. There is a particular emphasis on providing a welcome to people affected by mental illness, and it is sometimes remarked that the sessions, which have been running for some years now, provide

stability and reassurance for people who attend. We also continue to welcome anyone who needs company and gentle yet meaningful conversation. Over the past year we have benefited from the help of a Duke of Edinburgh Award candidate, and some of her wonderful baking! It has also been a pleasure to find peoples' confidence in singing improving as we enjoy a time of spiritual reflection at the end of each session, and nobody has yet turned down the opportunity to sing a hymn!

Marisa Baltrock

Prospects

We are fortunate in Saffron Walden to have the Wellbeing Hub on Audley Road, which provides a day centre supporting adults with learning disabilities. A small but dedicated team from St Mary's have been running a special service for the centre since December 2016.

The service always begins with the same song to welcome everyone and we use Makaton signing to go along with this song. All of the attendees love to sing and we have a variety of simple hymns that we regularly use. The familiarity helps everyone join in to some degree, even if it is just humming along to the tune. Originally we had a piano, which Judith would accompany us on, but this has now gone and so we take along some percussion instruments and sometimes have a guitar, and this does not seem to have held us back! It is quite amazing to see some of the attendees who are unable to participate in the rest of the service singing, clapping or even conducting along with the music. I am quite assured that this is a very vital part of the ministry in this service.

We usually focus the service on the Bible reading that we have had at the family service that month. This may simply be read or may be acted out. In looking at the same Bible reading however we can sometimes do a craft that links in with what was done at the Sunday service and we are then able to bring their craft and add it to the general display at St Mary's.



A craft activity is a major part of the service and due to the differing abilities of the participants can be a very busy part of the service for the team. We have made lanterns, story bead bracelets, paper flowers, cards and decorations to name but a few and these are very much treasured and either taken home, displayed at the centre or given to family members as gifts. Some of the attendees are quite talented at drawing and craft that involves some element of colouring or drawing is always warmly welcomed. Here is an example of our work when looking at the Christmas story

It is an absolute joy to play a part in running this service. The whole team leave feeling so uplifted having spent time with such special people. The service has grown in popularity with most of those attending the centre now choosing to come along whenever we are there. It seems that God's blessings are plentiful for everyone involved and a great deal of thanks goes to the Wellbeing centre and all of their amazing carers for welcoming us in to their community.

Tracey Nicholls

Education Committee

This year we are developing our home group ministry. In home groups people meet to study the Bible together, to learn from one another and to pray for each other. Belonging to a home group helps to nurture faith and to deepen relationships with others, and this is particularly important in a large church such as St Mary's.

In the Autumn Term, we took stock of our current home groups and found that there are six home groups running in conjunction with the church, though of these two were temporarily on hold. Many of these groups are well established and have run for a number of

years, though one new group began in the last year. Each group chooses their own topics to study, which have included the Book of Acts, Henri Nouwen's book Return of the Prodigal Son and the Gospel of Luke, using commentaries by Tom Wright and William Barclay.

In the review we found that the majority of the home groups were at capacity in terms of numbers and so we set about the process of establishing new groups. In January we produced a survey for the whole congregation to ascertain the demand. We received over one hundred responses and found that 67% of people are not connected to a small group, though the majority of these people would like to belong to one.

We are now in the process of establishing new home groups. One new group started meeting in January and we hope to set up at least two extra groups: one in the daytime and one in the evening. Our hope is that these groups become established, and that they become important places of nurture and fellowship.

In time, we would like to offer training, encouragement and resources to group leaders, as well as to provide social opportunities to allow those in other groups to meet one another. We will continue to encourage members of the congregation to join groups and hope to produce a leaflet with more details about these study groups.

We would like to thank all those that lead and host home groups for their time, generosity and faithfulness in building God's Kingdom, and we look forward to continuing to grow in our discipleship together.

Rachel Prior

Book Group

Are there books you have always wanted to read but have never got round to, or books you have not read but a friend has suggested you will enjoy? St Mary's Book Group seeks to do just that, and also to provide the opportunity to talk about the book we have read. The Group meets once a month on a Friday, at 8.15pm, to discuss a book suggested by one of its members. These may be classics everyone feels they would like to be familiar with, or very recent publications. Over the past year we have read a wide variety of books, among them Gulliver's Travels and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, John Le Carré's A Delicate Truth, Go Set a Watchman! (the sequel to To Kill a Mockingbird) and Zadie Smith's novel of contemporary life in north London, NW. We also discussed Simon Sebag-Montefiore's long account of the unhappy history of Jerusalem, Jerusalem: The Biography.

All of these led to lively discussion of the social and ethical issues they raise, and more, over tea and coffee, with a log fire in the background in



winter. The dates of meetings are agreed by the members, with a summer break. Membership is entirely open-ended and new members are always welcome. Attendance at any meeting varies according to how interesting members have found the book. Details of the date of the next meeting and of the title to be discussed are published *The Grapevine* each week. Saffron Walden Library provides the books for us: I have the copies we have received of the chosen book, and I can let you have a copy if you would like to come to a meeting. Just ask me for a copy. *The Grapevine* gives my telephone number.

Robin O'Neill

Social Committee

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Social Committee which I took over in late November 2017. I hope that I can continue the good work that Peter Taylor has done for many years and with the great hospitality that St Mary's has become known for.

Our vision '*welcome everyone warmly and offer generous hospitality*' remains at the heart of everything we do and continues to steer the direction of the Social Committee through 2018 and beyond.

The new servery at the back of the church is now fully functional and working well enabling us to offer refreshments to the congregation on a regular basis. A rota is now well established, meaning that we always have people available to help serve and the occasional new person to join enabling the load to be spread amongst more people.

The Sunday Brunch is now well established as part of the Family Service. We now have a rota in place and a reasonably large group of people to deliver the brunch. It has certainly encouraged more people to stay after the service and we hope to continue to attract more families in the future.

September was a busy month with hospitality on offer for the Ordination Service on the 29th September for Rachel Prior, John Saxon, Paul Grover, Mark Payne, Janet Parker, Claire Robertson and Philip Howlett, being ordained priests by Rt. Revd Roger Morris. Also in September, we catered for Tim Hardingham and Nell Bacon's wedding on the 15th September which was a great event. And finally, on the 23rd September we hosted a 'bring and share' farewell lunch for Pete and Margaret Taylor which was very well attended.

We continue to provide hospitality for a wide range of services/events in church. Activities in which members of the team are involved range from providing hot drinks and biscuits for the occasional service, to serving mulled wine at the Epiphany Carol service and hot cross buns at Easter.

The Autumn Fair was another great success with excellent organisation and service meaning we could serve a large number of people in a short space of time. We had a wide range of lunches on offer including vegetarian and also gluten free cakes. We kept

prices the same as the previous year, thereby offering delicious home cooked food that proved to be great value for money.

There were some issues on the day of the event with the kitchen which proved to be a problem with the electrics cutting out in the middle of service. The oven also took a very long time to bring the food up to temperature delaying some of the dishes. We may need to think about what foods we offer at the next fayre to ease the burden on the oven – perhaps more dishes that can be heated on the hob.

I would like to thank all members of the social committee for their commitment and skills freely given. Also, thanks to others who offer their help as needs arise, especially the Brunch Team. And thank you to Pete for all his support this year. Pete's Pantry will live on in his memory!

*Carolyn London,
Chair of the Social Committee*

Communications Committee

Two major projects were undertaken during the year – both, I believe, successfully.

The first was to review the content and presentation of the St Mary's Christmas card which is delivered to every home in Saffron Walden. The process was lengthy and involved discussions with the whole PCC, but the outcome was an attractive multi-coloured card which seems to have been well received. It was a challenge to get it delivered to the large number of homes within the town, but in the end it got to all but about 100 (out of nearly 7,500). Particular thanks are due to Clifford Want who patiently worked on numerous design iterations and arranged the final printing. A major lesson learnt through the process is how cheaply it is now possible to print and fold colour cards.

The second project was the upgrade of the church website and its transfer to a new service host. This work was undertaken largely by Martin Hugall, assisted by Charles Cowper. The new website is very attractive and, just as important, it is more manageable by St Mary's rather than requiring input from the host company for relatively small changes – something that had been a source of frustration over a number of years.

Last year I reported that the committee was working alongside the Arts Society on a new church trail. We were grateful to the Arts Society for incorporating a number of suggested changes to the trail before its launch, which took place on the weekend of Harvest Festival, and to the church for arranging for the provision of attractive stands, in keeping with the new furnishings at the back of the church, in which to keep and display copies of the trail.

As ever, it is necessary to keep the church's range of leaflets under review. This is an on-going process and this year centred on a further revision to the 'Children and Young People' leaflet.

During the year St. Mary's issued a number of press releases, a process ably managed by our new Press Officer, Clifford Want, who had swapped jobs with Liz Lingley who is now our very efficient Secretary. We are grateful to our anonymous donor who has continued to enable us to place a monthly advertisement about a number of church activities in the *Walden Local*.

It is, I believe, important here to record our thanks to John Sibson, who has recently (since the end of the reporting year) announced his impending retirement as co-ordinator of the team who produce *Parish News* (John has always refused to be referred to as 'the Editor!'). At the time of writing this report we are starting the process to find a new Editor.

I am grateful to all the members of the committee for their contributions to our work and for their work of ensuring that we keep members of the church and the wider community informed about what is going on at St Mary's.

*Rufus Barnes Chair,
Communications Committee*

Parish Office

The Parish Office has had a very busy year, but that probably goes without saying.

A Big THANK YOU to our wonderful team of parish office team volunteers. We just wouldn't be able to operate without each one of you. Thank you for all the extra times you come in too.

We produce photocopying and collating for our own church of St Mary's as well as the wider team of churches that make up Saffron Walden & Villages Team ministry. We also do copying for other

more outlying churches in our vicinity. The Parish Office is often a signpost for many people asking for advice or to know the name of someone who may be able to help them. We copy notice sheets, service sheets, leaflets, parish magazines, VBS copying, mailshots, etc. This only covers some of things we do. In addition, we order essential church supplies for the Parish Rooms and the church, candles of all sizes, and for all occasions, wine and wafers, stationary etc. We administer the hiring out of the Parish Rooms and church to church groups and outside hirers.

A thankyou to Jill Hrouda, David's secretary who produces *The Grapevine* our weekly notice sheet of which we then make hundreds of copies. We even hit the dizzy heights of 1,000 copies of the *Christmas Grapevine*. Thankyou also to Judith Hasler our Team Facilitator for her invaluable help and advice at all times.

We enjoyed a Parish Office team BBQ at the Rectory in Debden in the summer. It was good to relax and enjoy one another's company in a social atmosphere.

We are still on the lookout for a few more people to join our team of dedicated Parish Office volunteers. Please speak to me in the office to find out more.

Dawn Saxon
Parish Administrator

Weddings Coordinator

In 2018, there were 21 weddings: 12 at Saffron Walden, one Wenden, five Gt Chesterford, one Littlebury, one Ashdon, one Debden and one wedding blessing at Saffron Walden.

The wedding of Tim Hardingham and Nell Bacon was a wonderful occasion in September with stunning flower displays, beautiful music including the whole congregation joining the choir in a rousing rendition of Hallelujah Chorus as the recessional. Two weeks later, a much more intimate wedding took place but it was nonetheless special. Adam Trimnell, whose family has lived in Saffron Walden for generations, married his fiancée Viera Liscakova on the 50th anniversary of his parents' marriage in St Mary's.

Richard Freeman ventured into unfamiliar territory last year and offered to record the bells rung on the couple's actual wedding day. One couple took him up on his offer and they were delighted but Richard admits it took rather longer to edit the recording and

execute it than he had anticipated. Thank you, Richard, for this innovation.

It is a pleasure to welcome Alex Jeewan to the team ministry who has already taken two weddings at All Saints, Gt Chesterford and will be taking two more this year, one at All Saints and one at St Mary's. Also, newly-ordained Rachel and John are now qualified to take weddings so they have been getting to know the couples whom they will be marrying this year at St Mary's and at Debden.

It is lovely to have them all as part of the team and I value their enthusiasm and thoughtful preparation with the couples.

In 2019 so far 22 weddings in the team ministry and two wedding blessings are booked including three couples from the church family:

Sam Gray and Hannah Harpum in July, Jim Butler and Yvonne Huang in August and Bryony Hoy and Mark How in September.

Please continue to pray for all the wedding couples and I thank all those who support the work I do in this area.

Caroline Goulder, Wedding Coordinator

Children and Youth Committee

As always, this committee meets termly to discuss all the activities provided by our church for children and young people, from the very youngest who attend Tinies to the teenagers in Aftershock, the Choral Scholars or attending the High School. We have a rich provision for all, and a number of children attend two or more of the activities. Our specific church groups include Tinies, Team JC, Aftershock, and the music groups including Joyful Noise, the Junior Choir, the Choral Scholars and the Brass Group if it includes any under 18's. T3, which involves young children and parents from the church school has recently met for specific events rather than week by week. We also hear about the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers who meet in the Parish Rooms each week and provide a uniformed presence from time to time at the Family Service. This year we have also heard about our new Organ Scholar and the organ outreach concert which attracted an audience of over 200 Year 3 children.

Our Youth Worker, Matt Williamson continues to be actively involved with many of these groups, whilst also supporting Christian clubs at both St Mary's Primary School and Saffron Walden County

High School each week, providing church outreach to both schools. We also, as a church, support the annual VBS week in August, which draws in children from Saffron Walden and the surrounding villages.

All group leaders automatically have membership of this committee. This term Anne Cass, who has taken on the leadership of Joyful Noise from Kate Beare, has joined the committee. In the Autumn term we also welcomed our Parish Assistant, Charles Cowper to join our other members: Matt Williamson, Alison Knights, Oliver King, Helen O'Neill, Bron Ferland and Kathryn Bennett who is the PCC Safeguarding Representative for children and young people.

All adult volunteers have to be checked by the Diocese and approved for work with young people by this committee. As always, group leaders are grateful for the support of these volunteers, without whom we would be unable to carry out the range of work we do. There is always a need for more volunteers. If there is anyone who thinks that they may have a calling to assist with a group in order to further God's work in this place please do contact Matt or any other group leader for further information.

We take to the PCC for its approval any off site activities proposed by the various church groups and inform PCC members of other events too. Since the last report, T3 held an Easter event for children and families. Aftershock members attended the annual *Soul Survivor* event and also enjoyed a scavenger hunt. At the church Autumn Fair it was a delight to see that Aftershock, Joyful Noise, the Junior Choir, the Choral Scholars and the uniformed organisations were all actively involved. Joyful Noise have sung at Celebrate services, Christingle and on Christmas Eve. The Junior Choir have sung regularly at Family Services, and on Christmas Eve. This January an Epiphany Party was held for the reception children and their families from our church school. Aftershock again held their annual fundraising meal, which raised £1,600 for Jimmy's Night shelter. Visits off site have included a trip to sing Evensong at Guildford Cathedral with the Choral Scholars and Adult Choir. The Choral Scholars have held their own informal concert and the brass group has played not just at services at Easter and Christmas but has played at other local events.

It is heartwarming to see the amount of work we are able to do for and with the young people of our church. Please give the children and their leaders your prayerful support as we seek to nurture the church of the future.

Bron Ferland Chair, Children & Youth Committee

St. Mary's Tinies

St Mary's Tinies meet each Tuesday afternoon during term time at 2pm in the church for a short age appropriate service which includes a Bible story, songs, instruments and prayers followed by refreshments, craft and toys in the Parish Rooms.

We have been delighted to welcome Charles Cowper onto our team this year and he will be leading Tinies whilst I am away on an extended break in France. It has been great to have another male on the team and wonderful to watch the children's faces when that amazing voice booms forth during our songs!

Numbers attending fluctuate for no apparent reason – sometimes when it's cold and wet we expect a low attendance and are surprised when Tinies is really busy. One of our mums is almost keeping us in business single handedly by recently producing baby number 8!

We have continued to welcome the Reception class from St Mary's Primary School and children from the Preschool to a Tinies session twice each term. Our topics include some of the 'big' stories from the Old Testament such as creation, as well as some of the major events in the life of Jesus and stories that he told.

The craft activities related to each week's story are always popular and usually involve sticking. Sometimes we combine our skills to produce a display for the Parish Room wall – if you have time do go and admire our illustration of Jonah and the big fish. We made windcatchers when



we talked about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and, as you can see from this photo, one little boy was hoping that the power of the Spirit would make his bike go that little bit faster!

We have a fantastic, committed team running Tinies, each of us with unique gifts and talents. We are also extremely beautiful – as the following photo confirms!



Alison Knights

St. Mary's Pre School

Another year has passed and Pre School has had an exciting, challenging and rewarding 12 months! We have welcomed new families and said goodbye to others. Our Forest School sessions continue to provide a stimulating, sensory learning environment for the children. The children have been learning about how to be safe around an open fire, making mud pies, learning about wildlife, to 'have a go' at new challenges, meeting new people who have come to visit us to help us learn about trees and experiencing different types of weather.

A big well done to two staff members, Aniela and Vicky, who have worked hard to gain their level 2 Childcare qualification. During the year the children have learnt about many exciting festivals from around the world and were amazing in our Nativity play in St Mary's Church. We have held a Mothers' Day tea party, a Fathers' Day breakfast and had a very successful fundraising week.

We held our annual Camp Out for our school leavers and their parents. What a wonderful time we had. A picnic on the field, roasting marshmallows, hot chocolate and stories before bed and staying up late! As always the children were amazing and a good time was had by all! Our end of term party was a celebration of everything summer! We played games and had a picnic on the field and sadly said goodbye to all our families whose children were moving onto 'big' school.

Ofsted came in for their inspection in March and we were very proud to have been graded as Outstanding! This is all down to the hard work, time, effort, team work and passion of the staff.

As reported last year we gained our Silver award for our Autism Friendly Setting and with hard work from our Autism Leads Maxine Fenwick and Carolyn Seal we have now been awarded our Gold Award. We are the only setting in West Essex to have achieved this award of which we are very proud.

We continue to be supported by Alison Knights, who visits weekly to sing songs and read stories to the children and to the Tinies group who welcome us when we come to visit. Our thanks also go out to Saffron Walden Town Council for their support with Forest School and to our amazing local Health Visitors Team who offer advice and support to Pre School and our families, our Speech and Language therapists and the Specialist Teachers team. Our biggest thanks go to our wonderful children and families supporting Pre School. As you can see another busy but exciting year for Pre School.

Faye Jeffs, St. Mary's Church Pre School

St. Mary's C.E. Primary School

2018 has been another successful year for the school, despite facing some tough challenges. Some key members of staff left at the end of the summer term including the Head, Karen Cayford who moved on to progress her career at a larger school and the Assistant Head, Jennifer Overton. However, the fantastic end of year KS2 SATs results were a credit to their and the rest of the staff's hard work and dedication to the School.

In July, the school received £2,000 community funding from Tesco. This money is currently in the process of being spent on new IT classroom resources.



The school was also grateful for the PCC grant, which has been spent on improving the resources that the school uses to teach RE and boost christian distinctiveness.

St Mary's welcomed Fiona Reid as acting head in September 2018, who will be with us until July 2019, while the governors recruit a replacement. Interviews for Head will be held in February 2019.

St Marys has been working hard to ensure there are strong links with the church, there has been a number of wonderful joint events run by the School and Church including



- A flower arranging session for Harvest festival
- Light day led by the worship council
- Christmas Nativity
- Reception pupils attendance of Tinies

The children have driven a number of fund-raising events for charities that they have chosen to support. These include

- a pyjama day
- A reverse advent calendar event to collect for the food bank
- A Christmas jumper day to raise money for save the children.

*Victoria Boraster-Sharpe,
Chair of Governors*

St. Mary's Guiding

7th Saffron Walden (St. Mary's) Rainbows

We continue to be full with a long waiting list. We have 15 Rainbows and two very helpful young leaders as well as three adult leaders. Last term we introduced the new guiding programme and have been concentrating on the 'about me' section where the girls have taken part in various activities to do with self-awareness and team work.

We have also taken part in our annual District Christmas craft and carol evening, attended the Saffron Players pantomime and fundraised for Cancer Research UK by holding a bring-and-buy sale. We are looking forward to continuing our new programme and taking part in a District activity day later in the year.

Alison Alderman, Rainbow Leader

7th Saffron Walden (St. Mary's) Brownies

We enjoyed a successful pack holiday in April and invited Littlebury Brownies to join us. The theme was "Books, Books, Books" and we had a lovely time making up stories with puppets, doing marbling, and dressing up as a favourite book character. During the summer we took advantage of the lovely weather and had a cook out when we made the best ever dampers and toasted marshmallows, went for a walk in Audley End Park and had a scavenger hunt in Bridge End Gardens. In June the County Commissioner visited us to present Saffy, one of our young leaders, with a Buddy Award in recognition of the support she has given to one of our Brownies for over three years. Since September we have been working on various activities from the new guiding programme, been swimming, taken part in the church Christmas Fair and been to the local pantomime.

Margaret Jacobs, Asst Brownie Leader

7th Saffron Walden (St. Mary's) Guides

During the Spring and Summer terms the Guides enjoyed working on the Emergency Services, First Aid and Fire Safety badges which included a trip to the Fairycroft St John's Ambulance Unit, Saffron Walden Fire Station and some fun yet careful camp fire making in the woods. At the end of the Summer the Guides said farewell to Elli Flicos as Guide Leader and we wish her luck in her new unit in Waterbeach. We have a new volunteer Sophia who joined the unit during the Summer term as leader in training and is

running the unit alongside leader Christina Hammond, unit helper Saffy and young leader Jamie.

The Guides achieved the Poppy Challenge Badge during the Autumn term which fitted in nicely with the attendance at the Remembrance Parade. The Guides also thoroughly enjoyed a trip to the Harlow Activity Centre Climbing Wall which was funded by a Jack Petchey award. We look forward to getting to grips with the new Guide programme throughout 2019.

Sophia Tirelli, Leader in Training.

Saffron Walden District Senior Section/Rangers

Girlguiding has introduced a new programme this year and this has entailed a name change from Senior Section to Rangers for the 14-18 age group. We meet every other week during term time and now have 9 members. One of the girls from the group represented Anglia Region on a visit to Girlguiding in India so we spent the summer term on activities relating to India including playing cricket and eating curry both of which were new to some of our members. Since then we have completed a First Aid badge and are now working on our exploration skills.

Margaret Jacobs, Ranger Leader

Women's Own

Women's Own has offered *Fun, Faith, Fellowship and Food* to the ladies of our parish for one hour on a Saturday morning for many years now. In 2018 we continued to meet including hearing from Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop who talked to us about "Why on earth have sermons?" and from Gill Godber who shared with us about the work of CBM (formerly Christian Blind Mission) an international Christian development organization, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in the poorest communities of the world.

After much prayer for guidance for the future, the Women's Own committee feel that it is time to step down from this work to concentrate on other callings and family demands, and are very thankful to all who have supported this encouraging work, some from its conception over 14 years ago!

Give thanks to the Lord who has done great things for us!

Judith Felgate

Mothers' Union

Worship: Members travel to the beautiful church of St Nicholas in Berden in Holy Week and Advent for a service of meditation by Rev'd Margaret Davis or Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop. At Advent in Berden, we placed battery operated night lights on a huge map of the world spread at the foot of the chancel steps. The object was to show where we thought the 'light of the world' was most needed and our connection with the place chosen.

On Ascension Day Rev'd David Tomlinson presided over our Deanery Festival Service when we welcomed Rev'd Paula Griffiths as our guest preacher. In September we have a communion service in the North Chapel

Prayer/overseas: In June we met at the Salvation Army Church to pray for our Wave of Prayer Link Branches in South Sudan, the Military Episcopate in Kenya, Nigeria, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and our Chelmsford Diocese. This was followed by discussion about the importance of supporting the work of the MU overseas. We also hold a monthly prayer group when we pray for MU members at home and overseas.

Speakers: At the 2018 AGM John Reid spoke about his recently published 'A History and Guide to St Mary's Church'. In March our curate, Rev'd John Saxon, gave a talk on his journey to ordination. He had previously been a



paramedic and teacher of special needs children. In October Anna Martin spoke to us about working at the University of Cambridge library. In November Colonel Joseph Horden spoke about life in the army as a Christian. Finally, our curate Rev'd Rachel Prior came to tell us about her recent trip to Kenya. All speakers were very interesting.

Highlights of the year: Rachel's illustrated talk on her recent trip to Kenya both informed and entertained us all. Her enthusiasm was infectious and the joy and strong faith of the Kenyan Christians gave us all great pleasure.

We also celebrated the 90th birthday of two members, one in August and the other in September. Both were presented with a decorated, fruit birthday cake, helium balloons marked 90, flowers and cards. Both have been active members of the MU for many years.

Other meetings: Our Christmas party was held at Custerson Court by kind invitation of the manager Mrs Gloria Archer. It was a new Venue and enjoyed by everyone. We have a small choir who sing on special MU occasions and we are invited annually to sing at the Women's World Day of prayer ecumenical service. This concludes a very active, enjoyable and well supported year.

Brenda Sheath, Branch Leader

Women Who Wonder (WWW)

WWW continues to meet at my home on the 2nd evening of each month apart from August and December. We number approximately 8-10 at each meeting but not always the same women. Over the last year we have experienced both Celtic and Taize worship, explored the roles of woman in the Bible, looking at the work of Tearfund as well as other themes. Everyone is encouraged to share if they wish and we all learn from each other.

The meetings are advertised in *The Grapevine* and we would really pleased to be joined by new members.

Gill Caswell

Men's Activities

The men's activities have continued to flourish during the past twelve months as we seek to encourage and develop social contact, providing fellowship and support as well as inviting further involvement in the life of our church. Broadly, there were five group activities – a Lent Study Course, Saturday Breakfasts, Suppers, M5 Wednesday Pub Lunches and Saturday Walks.

Lent Study Course

Our 2018 Lent Study Course ran for five consecutive Tuesday evenings from 20th February to 20th March when Rev'd Jeremy Collingwood took us through St John's Gospel, which has been described as "deep enough for an elephant to swim and shallow enough for a child in which to paddle", under the resume title "A Birds Eye View".

Jeremy broke the course of study down into five manageable sections:

The Beginnings – covering Chapter 1 v1 -18, John's Prologue leading into the beginnings of Jesus' Ministry, Chapter 1 v19 - 51.

The Signs and Public Discourses of the Christ – covering Chapter 2 v1 – Chapter 12 v50, the Miracles and the close of Jesus' Public Ministry in Chapter 12 v1 - 50.

The Farewell Discourses – covering Chapter 13 v1 - 30, the foot washing, to Chapter 17 v1-26, Jesus prays for himself, his disciples and for future believers.

The Crucifixion – covering Chapter 18 v1 – Chapter 19 v42 from Jesus' arrest and trials to his crucifixion, death and burial.

The Resurrection – covering Chapter 20 v1 – Chapter 21 v25, the empty tomb to Jesus' appearances to his disciples.

As in previous years, our evenings commenced with a home cooked supper for which we were always most grateful to those men who, in turn, volunteered to prepare the meal. Jeremy then gave his talk after which we divided into discussion groups to consider issues and questions arising from the text.

We were sorry to learn that this year would be the last Lent Course at The Manse and we expressed our appreciation of Jeremy's diligent and faithful discipleship and the generous hospitality always shown to us by him and Margaret in their home. We wished Margaret well in her forthcoming retirement and to them both, a relaxing and rewarding celebratory world cruise early in 2019.

Saturday Breakfasts

Our well attended 2018 programme provided for four breakfasts:

At our first, held on 10th February in the Parish Rooms, Dr Pamela Jenner gave us an illuminating and inspirational talk entitled 'Young People and Mental Health' in which she detailed the work of the *Open Door Counselling Service for Young People*, the charity

she established in Uttlesford some 20 years ago and continues to lead.

For the second, held on 7th April, we returned to the Saffron Hotel to hear Robin Plumridge's fascinating talk about his agricultural origins in rural Hampshire and Buckinghamshire before his arrival in Ashdon where he is now long settled, becoming and continuing as Churchwarden at All Saints.

On 9th June, back in the Parish Room, we were privileged to have Colonel Joe Hordern as our speaker talking about his life and amazingly diverse career as a Christian soldier.

Our experience of the service at the Saffron Hotel in April left something to be desired and knowing that Pete Taylor, for so long our indefatigable inhouse breakfast catering organiser, was about to retire to Hampshire, led us to explore other potential venues in which to stage our fourth breakfast of the year, there being no volunteer in our midst to take up the mantle from Pete. We found the Kings Arms was the only venue offering to stage the event but could accommodate a party of no more than 25.

Our speaker for the fourth breakfast of the year on 13th October was our Rev'd John Saxon who gave us a very full and truly personal account of his life, varied career and journey to faith.

At the time of writing, we have yet to embark on our 2019 breakfast programme which commences on 9th February with our guest speaker Rev'd John Goddard.

Suppers

Formerly known as Curry Nights, an annual event established well over 20 years ago and then taking place just before Christmas, the current programme of Suppers has been operating since 2012.

As now customary, we have continued with four Suppers during 2018. Our normal practice to vary the day of week to make the event as widely open as possible, has been affected this year by conflict with other commitments and the resulting heavy emphasis on Friday may account to some extent for a slightly reduced attendance, numbers having fluctuated between 8 and 12.

Our programme during 2018 took us to The Mogul on Wednesday 24th January, The Yuva in Debden on Friday 16th March, The Jade Garden on Friday 18th May and The Crown in Little Walden on Friday 30th November.

Each evening has been a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding social occasion providing the opportunity to get to know one another better, promoting fellowship and sharing good food together.

As with our other activities, all men are welcome both from within the Saffron Walden Team Ministry and beyond. Friends and neighbours too are warmly welcomed.

The new 2019 programme has already started and promises to build on the good work of previous years. As before, advanced notification of these events will be given and a sign-up sheet posted on the notice board at the back of church.

M5 Wednesday Pub Lunches

Our M5 (derived from St Mary's Men's Monthly Midweek Meet) lunchtime get-togethers are now entering their 6th year. We meet at The Kings Arms on Market Hill at 12:15 on the first Wednesday of the month for an hour or two of mutual support and fellowship whilst enjoying a drink and good food from the bar menu.

The event is completely informal and continues in our 2019 programme. All are most welcome, friends and neighbours too. Other than for the Christmas lunch there is no need to book or sign up. Just turn up and join us from 12:15.

It remained as popular as ever in 2018, routinely attracting an attendance of between 9 and 16. On Wednesday 5th December, when 14 attended in festive mood, we celebrated with a delicious full Christmas lunch and on this occasion, to our great loss, we said our final fond farewell to Pete Taylor, just a week before he and Margaret moved to Hampshire.

Sadly too, we lost our dear friend and long term regular, Bishop Derek Bond, this year. He is much missed at our gathering. RIP.

Saturday Walks in 2018

We have tried to formulate walks taking in churches on the way where they are open. The important requirements are:

- Walk commencement within easy reach by car or public transport and preferably close to a pub.
- Walk about 5 miles long taking no more than 2 ½ hours.
- More than most of the walk takes place on public or permissive footpaths rather than highways.

January: a walk from the Bell at Wenden south to Newport and around to the west. Many of the footpaths had been churned up by

hare coursers but we kept to the winter rule of not straying onto ploughed fields.

March: this walk was led by Andrew Pickering centring on Ashdon and Bartlow.

May: this walk was led by Peter Cooper from Newport to Debden Park and back.

July: we curtailed the walk on this hot day. We started in Henham and walked south east to Chickney where we spent time at the beautiful redundant church, which regrettably is on the flight path less than a mile from the airport. We returned to Henham and spent time in St Mary's before retiring to the Crown.

September: we took the bus to Debden and walked back to Walden, lunching at the Temeraire.

November: on the eve of the Armistice centenary, we took in the churches at Ickleton, Hinxton and Duxford and their war memorials. Each of the churches and memorials differs considerably from the others and Duxford has another redundant church. As there was a larger number than we expected we returned to Walden for lunch.

Bill Rose and Anthony Armon-Jones

Finance Committee

The Committee continues to monitor the finances of St Mary's on behalf of the PCC and met 3 times during the year. The membership of the Finance Committee comprises the Rector, Churchwardens and Treasurer (all ex officio), together with Jenny Cottam, Michael Dix, Steve Hasler, Robin O'Neill and Stephen Wood (Chairman). Stephen Wood stood down both as Chairman and as a member of the Committee at the end of the year. The routine business of the Committee is unchanged:

- To receive reports from the Treasurer on the current financial position;*
- Consider any change to our investments;*
- Consider requests for immediate or future expenditure which need authorisation either by the Committee, or a recommendation from the Committee to the PCC;*
- Review what we pay our employees;*
- Review the Treasurer's proposed budget for the next year;*

- *Review the draft annual accounts.*

Other routine matters include:

- *Review of quarterly management accounts and variances to budget, monitoring of cash reserves;*
- *Review of the reserves policy;*
- *Commenting on the Diocesan Budget for forthcoming year.*

From a financial perspective 2018 was a better year than planned. Having set out with a small deficit of £4,200 (before depreciation and gains on investments), the outcome, at the time of writing, is expected to be a surplus in excess of £4,000 due in part to greater receipts than originally anticipated from stewardship giving, general donations and Parish Rooms lettings. Once again, our Christmas Fair delivered in excess of £6,000.

The ongoing challenge will be continuing to fund the 'building project'. The West End Phases of the project (Serving, Welcome Facilities and WC) have been completed and the next work being planned is moving and the restoration of the Audley Tomb.

However, it is the funding of ministry that is the core requirement. Over the past few years we have broadened the base of our stewardship giving, and in total committed giving has risen steadily to £195,000 pa. Stewardship giving, including Gift Aid, continues to finance over 70% of our total annual expenditure, for which we give thanks. In broad terms our total income for 2019 excluding monies raised specifically for the Building Project is expected to be around £263,000, a shortfall of £3,400 of the budgeted expenditure.

Stephen Wood
Chair, Finance Committee

Property Committee

The Property Management Committee is responsible for: ensuring the fabric of St Mary's is maintained in good order, including dealing with the recommendations of the quinquennial survey, the maintenance of the Curate's house, Verger's cottage and Parish Rooms, and, in liaison with the Town Council, ensuring that the Churchyard and trees are in good order.

Further to the quinquennial survey recommendations, a second expert opinion on the state of the chancel roof concluded that it does not need replacing for another 7-10 years. The church architect agreed with this assessment. Repairs were carried out on the North Aisle Roof where small leaks had occurred.

In the churchyard, the rebuilding of the grass bank and the re-surfacing of the roadway at the west end of the church was completed in January 2018, and the Town Council filled in a number of potholes in the roadway later in the year. Two new benches were installed, kindly donated by Janet Jarrold and the Friends of St Mary's.

The water supply to the Verger's cottage failed during the very cold weather in February due to a leak under the path from the churchyard to Castle Street. The supply was quickly re-established by re-routing it from the pipework in the Parish Rooms. It took until mid-May to get Affinity Water to accept responsibility for the leak and carry out a repair. We were most grateful to our Fabric Officer, Joe Stuckey for his persistence and patience, and we were very sorry to lose his help when he moved to Hampshire in October. We are actively seeking a new Fabric Officer to help with the many small tasks which need attention if we are to continue to maintain our buildings to a high standard, and remedy faults promptly.

Future projects, when funds allow, include refurbishment of the Parish Rooms upstairs, mechanisation of the south door to improve disabled access, and provision of a small number of additional parking places on the south side of the church.

Steve Hasler stepped down as Chair of the committee in June and Denis Tindley agreed to take over. Steve has stayed on the committee and retains his role as minutes secretary. We are very grateful to Steve for his excellent leadership of the committee during the very busy period of building work. We were also sorry to say farewell to Peter Karolyi due to his move to the Netherlands, and the committee recorded its thanks for his contributions.

Denis Tindley

Chair, Property Committee

Buildings Project

During 2018, work continued on the second phase of the reordering project at the west end of church, namely the construction of the WC and the run of cupboards along the west

wall, as well as the relocation of the ledger stones and of the font. The internal work was completed over the summer and after much last-minute chasing of the final details, including installation of an emergency light (which had somehow been overlooked by everyone), the WC was handed over in August in time for Bishop Derek's funeral. The final external groundworks were then completed in October.

As we become accustomed to using these new facilities in church, we have the chance to reflect on and give thanks for all that has been achieved. We believe that, after some 10 years in its planning and execution, the project has met, if not



exceeded, our expectations. Our needs have all been met: bringing water into the church, improving facilities for welcoming and offering refreshments to visitors, installing an accessible toilet (much used and appreciated), creating space for flower arrangers and providing much needed storage.

Aesthetically the English oak carved woodwork is cleverly designed, is beautiful and is greatly admired - it fits so well within the building that it seems to have been part of the church fabric for many a year. Indeed, many visitors comment appreciatively and frequently ask 'how long ago was it done?' This substantial



reordering has been achieved without detracting in any way from the visitor's sense of awe on entering through the west door and seeing the magnificence of the nave and space in this 16th century church. This reordering is an enhancement to St. Mary's that will serve for many generations

to come and PCC was delighted to support KPTA's applications for DAC & RIBA design awards.

Having had a short but well-earned break, the Team has now turned its attention to the next phases of work, namely the relocation and restoration of the Audley Tomb and the reordering of the Clergy and Choir Vestries. Indeed, the PCC recently approved submission of a Faculty application to DAC for the Tomb, and we are planning to commence work on this in the middle of the year.

We are extremely grateful that sufficient funds have been made available to allow us to complete the first phases of reordering in the west end of church and to enable pursuit of the next phases to start. We have been blessed by the tremendous generosity of so many: all who have made donations, the grant making bodies, the PCC in releasing church reserves and everyone who has supported our fundraising activities in any way. And we will continue with these fundraising activities through the year to allow us to complete the project as intended.

*Graham Cottam on behalf of the
Buildings Project Team*

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

The Friends welcomed their new Patron, Lady Braybrooke, at their AGM in September and she expressed her delight at being asked. We said goodbye with grateful thanks to our Treasurer Christine Lawrence who has moved away from the area and welcomed our new Treasurer, Sandra Marsh, on board.



The Friends were able to continue to fund minor projects required in the church during this last year whilst the major buildings were concluded.

The Sewing Circle continue to produce their excellent kneelers and a further 10 were dedicated at the Friends Service in October along with a new Altar Frontal in memory of Susan Walker.

A site for the new Friends Banner, in the Remembrance Chapel area, has been agreed and a new stand is in the planning process.

Copies of 'A History & Guide' by John Read have sold extremely well this year, so much so that a re-print is in hand.

The translation of the Leche Tomb has been completed and is available for all to read and enjoy.

A new bench has been installed at the West Door entrance to the church which we trust will be well used and enjoyed by all.

Replacement kneeler hooks have been installed throughout the church. We have agreed to fund replacement carpeting in the nave which will hopefully be available very soon.

The Spring newsletter continues to be produced highlighting the work and plans of the Friends.

A new feature this year will be a visit to Peterborough Cathedral in June, organised by the Friends.

This has been a busy year for the Friends especially with us being able to make a major contribution, of almost £30,000 to the Building Project to pay for all of the Welcome Furniture. This is the largest donation ever to any single project in the history of the Friends.

Pamela Mugliston

Transition Project

During 2018, the Transition Project continued to welcome a steady flow of clients, some new and some old friends. On average we saw 2-3 people each week (103 consultations during 2018 and continuing at a similar rate in 2019) seeking employment help and advice. This might include reviewing CVs and letters, offering advice on where and how to search for new jobs, providing guidance on future employment paths or holding practice interviews. Or it might just be the chance for a cup of coffee and a friendly chat, providing general encouragement and support during what can be very testing times.

Although there have been a few very quiet periods with no clients for a couple of weeks, just as we start to discuss how we might make changes in order to operate more efficiently the flow of visitors starts again. And we have received a lot of positive feedback to confirm that what we are seeking to do is valued.

We have continued to see people of all ages (college leavers to the retired) and of varied backgrounds - for some reason we have recently seen a number of people from Europe (mainly Spain and Germany). Although most consultations are face to face on Tuesday mornings, we have been able to assist a few people by email or by telephone on occasions.

2019 started with contact from an Employer Adviser at JobCentre Plus, Braintree. He visits Saffron Walden every few weeks to try to identify jobs that are being advertised by employers around the town and he now calls in to update us on what he has found about jobs and about events in the area of potential interest to our clients. He also sends regular email updates of vacancies in the area. Most recently he has informed us of plans to open a Job Centre at the Council Offices in Saffron Walden, perhaps one day a week or fortnight. We also continue to make referrals to and receive them from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The team now has seven committed members all of whom bring a wealth of experience, wisdom and common sense to the project. We are grateful for continued support from Computercare and also thank Saffron Walden PCC for continuing to allow us to use the space downstairs in the Parish Rooms. And, of course, we frequently enjoy fascinating updates and anecdotes on all aspects of Welsh culture, in particular tales of cattle drovers and the curiosities of pre-Norman castles (thank you, Noel).

*Graham Cottam on behalf of the
Transition Project Team*

Jimmy's Group

Jimmy's continues to provide help for the homeless in Cambridge. They work with the local community, volunteers and partner agencies to deliver 24/7 emergency accommodation and supported housing for those who would otherwise be homeless or vulnerably housed. They support them through positive changes and help them resettle into more suitable and stable accommodation, leading them towards an independent lifestyle.

Along with the Harvest Festival donations in September, this year in support of Jimmy's our church family has collected £753.20 in regular donations and our Christmas Envelopes Appeal raised £507 (A big thank you to Judith Felgate for the Christmas noticeboard). This has been spent on vegetables from the market and donations given directly to Jimmy's.



Aftershock – our youth group of 11 - 18 year-olds – hosted a fund-raising event for Jimmy's Night Shelter. They helped in preparing a splendid dinner, decorating the parish rooms, serving food and providing an eclectic selection of entertainment. We were joined by Barry Griffiths from Jimmy's who talked to us about the work that they do. The super effort put in by Matt, Tracy, Helen and the Aftershockers raised £1,600 for Jimmy's.

We would like to thank you all for your continued generous support of Jimmy's. I'll finish this report with a quotation from a recently received letter to St Mary's from Barry Griffiths: "Without such kindness we would certainly not be able to provide the high level of service, care and individual attention that we do."

Tim Game

Archive Group

Unfortunately, we do not yet have anywhere to store archival material, and in the meantime are asking all church groups to ensure their records are retained.

Even without an Archive base the group continue to meet. To advertise that fact, I have endeavoured to produce monthly articles for *Parish News* (World War One) which it is hoped will have entertained and informed members of the congregation about events in the past. Having exhausted all the material we could find for the end of the First World War, there being no magazine material for 1918, we decided to do a series of pieces on the year 1888. We hope that the view of parish life that those pieces portrayed were of

interest. What should we do next? Well, in tune with year numbers the idea of the start of the Second World War was possible but on looking at 1939 there was nothing of real interest until the end of that year when hostilities began to be written about, so we will come back into editorial action at the end of this year.

Perhaps our highlight was our involvement once again in the National Heritage Day activities in September. One of the themes we followed was the first Civil War in the 12th Century and with a few artefacts borrowed from the Museum we had a Time Tent and a Time Line to attract visitors as well information about our famous Walden Women of the past. Over 100 people attended and expressed great interest in our exhibits. There were Guides to be with visitors as they visited the Audley Tomb or browsed the Parish Registers and other important documents, or wandered around the church with their information leaflets.

*Canon Chris Bishop
On behalf of the Archive Group*

Camera Group

Almost everybody today has a mobile telephone and the vast majority of these have digital cameras. The sharing of photographs on social media is now commonplace across the generations. The aim of this group is to gather together photographers, of every level of expertise, so as to encourage each other to deepen our appreciation of God and his world by taking photographs.

Following a notice in *The Grapevine* a 'closed' Facebook group (i.e. photographs are only accessible to registered members) was set up on 30th October 2018 entitled 'Camera Group (for St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden)'. Currently there are 11 members. I am the group administrator controlling access to the Facebook page; the Rector has become a group member so that a church officer has oversight of what is happening online. Membership of the group is restricted to the 18 + age group.

The group had its first meeting in November in the Parish Rooms. It was agreed that we shall set regular themed challenges e.g. bible passages, the church seasons, pictures that evoke a story etc. The first challenge has been 'inspiration from hymns and spiritual songs' and currently we have a gallery of 18 photographs which I hope, at some point, we can display in church. Perhaps they may be a spiritual resource for others to enjoy.

Printed below are two examples that best reproduce on paper (used with the authors' permission).



All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and
with us sing, alleluia, alleluia

© Gilly Hayes



When through the woods
and forest glades I wander,
... Then sings my soul ...
How great Thou art!

© Andy Colebrooke

Members are encouraged to accompany each post with some expression of what their picture has evoked in them. e.g. 'This pillbox close to Sir Joshua's Bridge by Wendens Ambo. This was built in 1940 as a part of the defences against a possible German invasion. My late father served in the army throughout WW II and reckoned they were death traps. I'm reminded of Psalm 118:8: It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.'

All members agree to welcome constructive comments on their pictures from others in the group, and to see how photography can deepen our spirituality and vice versa. We are aiming not to be competitors, but encouragers in our work together.

Our second meeting will be on 28th February at 7:30pm in The Parish Rooms when we will be reviewing our first challenge and setting another. New members are welcome at any time.

Andy Colebrooke

Links with the Worldwide Church:

Lynn Treneary, our CMS Mission Partner in Maridi, South Sudan

It has been a quieter year partly because Lynn herself has been quite unwell on and off for most of last year. It meant that she came home for four months in the summer in order to rest and go for tests to find the cause for her constant urinary infections and exhaustion. There have also been big problems with the internet in Chaima Institute and the diocese



However, we did have a wonderful lunch in March where we raised over £1,000 to send to Chaima Institute. This was due to Rufus Barnes being alert to a friend of his, Ann Tutt, getting involved in the setting up of The Episcopal Church of South Sudan & Sudan University Partnership (ECSSSUP), Chaima was in the process of being part of that partnership which has now happened. It took a while to get the money to Chaima, we heard in early summer that it had arrived but it was not till September that we had the final confirmation and that the money was spent on setting up a new discipleship training course as well as trying to improve the internet system.

Lynn went back in September, so far she seems to be in good health which is cause for thanks. Her News and Link letters, although sometimes are slow in coming, are well worth reading and praying with. They are a highlight in themselves! Lynn seems to be involved in so many areas it is hard to see how she manages to do it all. However, it is tough in Sudan, Graeme found an article in the I-paper about the horrors of years of war in Sudan which gave us another perspective on how things truly are and made me wonder even more how Lynn manages all that she does. All of Sudan needs our prayers but we as a church are committed to be particularly prayerful for those in Southern Sudan, Maridi, Chaima Institute and, of course Lynn.

Sue Walker, CMS Link

David and Sári, serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Romania

Sari and David moved to their house in rural Transylvania thirteen years ago. Since then the house, family and work have all expanded. Translation has continued with Sari and David becoming recognised as experienced translators and also being given administrative responsibility for the Roma translation team in Romania and Hungary. Initially they were working alone, but they now lead a team of translators and advise people working to increase scripture use. These people are introducing the text and other media to churches around the country. Their most recent work includes reaching the final pre-publication stage of the book of Judges. The entire family are also involved in the work of the local church.

The absence of a reading culture amongst the Roma has meant that spoken scriptures as well as illustrated booklets have been welcomed. Sari has checked several Bible stories and has been instrumental in helping create recordings and videos for internet and mobile apps. She is also creating and testing a series of reading primers as well as creating curriculum, materials and teaching methods for an after-school literacy project being launched in a village nearby. Sari trialled these materials by teaching Roma children, and sometimes their mother, to read in her home. This work has been expanded recently to include three weeks full time teaching of a Romani class in the local school. These children responded well to using literature and other support material in their own language. Visible progress in reading as well as class discipline illustrated the value of these materials.

In addition to the continuing work on translation and publication of CDs and DVDs, David has an increased team management role. His computing skills have been called upon to ensure that a multilingual web site (<https://ashunledevles.eu.org>) and the database for the European SIL Roma language project are adequately protected against malicious intrusion. This work has been further complicated by the demand that everything complies with the 2018 international data protection and privacy legislation.

The children are still doing well in their various schools but face challenges not experienced in the UK. Mark is now in his final year at secondary school and end of year exams will partly determine

university entry. Building work at Mark and Aniko's school was not completed last summer and classrooms have to be used 7am to 7.40pm with the day split between classes. If they were on the "early shift", they had to leave home around 5.50am. On the late shift, they would arrive home around 8.30pm and significant homework was still required. Emma has one more year at the local village school before taking final exams which will determine secondary school options. Erik has transferred to the primary school, complete with homework.

They drove the 1,500 miles to England in June and spent 10 weeks here. In addition to visiting and giving presentations to supporting churches, they also worked at VBS, attended a week at the Keswick Convention and managed to get a week's holiday in north Wales.

With careful management their financial support was adequate in 2018. However, inflation in Romania is double that in the UK (about 5%), they have growing children and there is a funding shortfall for the project itself. This means that some work expenses are coming from their own pocket. Until now most project expenses (e.g. salaries for translators and voice actors, travel and publications) have been supported separately.

The support of St Mary's church and individuals is much appreciated and Sari and David always emphasise that there is ample space in their home for visitors.



*Jenny Kirkaldy,
Mission Secretary*

Vision Statement

Our Mission

Sharing God's love

Our Vision

Our aim as a church is to:

worship God with joy and reverence

tell of God's love in Jesus Christ

learn about and live our Christian faith

pray and learn about prayer

serve God's world through prayer and action

offer Christ's ministry of wholeness and healing

encourage all to discover and use their gifts for God

engage with and nurture children and young people

welcome everyone warmly and offer generous hospitality

value and care for each other

In all this, we will use the resources we have - our time,
buildings and money - wisely in God's service.