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Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2019-20

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, Swards End

We have had a busy and interesting year with some significant changes and challenges but with a lot of support from clergy and congregation we are in good shape as we move forward into 2020. A new decade beckons and the Deputy Wardens are sure St James will continue to thrive with everyone pulling together and with God's grace. Salient points of 2019 are as follows:-

The most significant event was the departure to Birmingham of the Tomlinsons. Jenny had been caring for us pastorally for 10 years and had become close to all of us. Many of us also had a good and often close relationship with David through worship at St Mary's. We had an emotional last service at St James conducted by Jenny and David also took a service just before they left. Many of us went to Birmingham to celebrate Jenny's inauguration as Archdeacon of Birmingham. But onwards and upwards.



Of equal importance was Chris Bishop's offer to take over as our presiding clergy, albeit on a temporary basis, until a new rector is appointed. We already knew Chris and his involvement has been warmly received by everybody. We are very grateful to him for stepping up to the plate.

During the year, Keith Willey stepped down as joint Deputy Warden and Lynne Ketteridge took over in his place. I would like to express my thanks to Keith on behalf of us all for his unwavering

support and work. I am looking forward to working with Lynne and all the Committee.

We live in a village and St James is part of that village so outreach is important to us. To this end we organise:-

- Coffee mornings, one of which was in our church garden for the first time.
- Harvest Supper which was well attended with Robin King, the Archdeacon of Stansted, giving a talk after dinner.
- Youth Club, ably run by St Mary's youth worker and members of our congregation.
- The Parish Council has started meeting at St James monthly. This is good financially and also boosts our profile bringing new faces into the church often for the very first time.

On the services side of worship, our numbers are slightly down but we enjoyed a number of services in particular. These included Harvest Festival, Christmas Carols and Mothering Sunday where we had a Children's Pop Up Choir.

We continue to hold a Remembrance Day Service in our garden with a wreath being laid by a former Land Girl from the village in the presence of soldiers from Carver Barracks. We displayed some of the "*there but not there*" ghost figures which are very poignant.



Our carol singing around the village raised over £300 for *Crisis*, a record sum for us. An enjoyable evening.

A successful Lent Course organised by Judith Hasler and Jenny Tomlinson attracted participation from both St James and other churches in the team.

The church fabric is generally in good fettle but our fabric fund is sufficient to meet most foreseeable events should the need arise. Our general finances are also in good enough shape to support our running expenses and obligations.

So all in all a busy year thanks to our committee members, the clergy and congregation. Thanks to all.

Mike Dean and Lynne Ketteridge - Deputy Wardens

St John's Church, Little Walden

Church maintenance is a never-ending requirement for any church and St John's is no exception with tasks identified from the 2017 quinquennial reports and the last twice-yearly Church inspection that was carried out in September'19. Hopefully a working party will endeavour to undertake these tasks during the better weather in 2020. One future item for consideration is to redecorate the vestry as three of the four walls are showing signs of wear and tear with peeling paint especially noticeable above the safe. Two new porch notice boards have been installed, clearer to view and lockable to prevent ad hoc and unauthorised postings.

Our annual contract for our Chubb fire extinguishers was carried out and by prior agreement a PAT test on all electicals was undertaken however a multiplug adapter and a power transformer failed the test and needed to be replaced.

A local Gas-Safe company, (*Saffron Services*), was located and their quote accepted to provide the annual servicing of the two LPG fed gas heaters which was due in April'19. For reasons unknown *Saffron Services* failed consistently to organise a visit and in August'19, '*Gas Way of Stevenage*', (formally *Milgas*), carried out the servicing of the heaters and allowed St John's a small discount of 5% which was gratefully accepted.

A bat survey was carried out during the last week of August, various droppings were collected for analysis and a sound detector was installed over a three-day period. The report was finally received in late December which showed that bat droppings were found on the altar, nave and font. Sound analysis detected three bat species which were: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long eared bat. Useful contacts for the *Bats in Churches* organisation are in the H&S file in the vestry.

The St John's wedding banns book was dusted off and used to record the forth coming wedding of James and Michelle, it was a joy to welcome them and their families to three church services and I sincerely hope that one day they might visit us once again.

St John's hosted another *Forest Church* service in October'19 again organised by Helen Nash supported by other willing volunteers. The turnout was excellent with participants from other churches also attending. A very reflective and spiritual experience

was felt by all with positive feedback received, further services are planned.

Advent was, as usual, a busy time for St John's and it was a pleasure to be at both the carol service and the Christmas Day service, a rare occurrence for the Peet family. Both services attracted a higher than average attendance and special thanks go to all those who put in so much work to make the church look and feel spectacular, special and enjoyable.

Along with the new church rolls earlier in the year, the end of the year signalled the end of year '*Statistics of Mission*' submission to the diocese. Notable changes include the known reduction in our electoral roll down from thirty-three to seventeen, our average attendance throughout the year, excluding our special services, showed a decline from twelve to eleven which was reflected in our end of year attendance in our worshipping community down from nineteen to thirteen. The obvious concern is that this is a downward trend and it also means that there are fewer people trying to cover the day to day workload of our church. We sincerely hope and pray that new families will once again come and be welcomed in our small village church.

The life of the church, the building and its congregation rely so much on a number of individuals, including the visiting clergy for our Holy Communion services, special thanks must go to Rev'd Michael Lovegrove for his continual support during the past year. Further thanks go to the entire congregation for all the work and support that they have given me and to the church.

The departure of David Tomlinson and the planned departure of Rachel Prior, in March on maternity leave, has meant that more support is needed from the remaining clergy and from our Licensed Lay Ministers.

For personal reasons I have announced that I will not be standing for re-election in March'20. I have enjoyed supporting St John's church over the years and hope that my small contribution has helped both the church and its congregation. In future it has been agreed that the duties of the Warden will be split between members of the congregation under the direction of Rev'd Michael Lovegrove.

*Richard Peet
Deputy Warden*

Worship Committee

Under David Tomlinson's chairmanship this committee has met twice in the past year. The committee membership includes the Churchwardens, the Director of Music, the curate, Mike Felgate, Jenny Kirkaldy and Bron Ferland. Its function is to look at the worship in church, the regular and special services and make recommendations as appropriate.

As always, there has been a huge diversity in the types of worship offered at St Mary's: a diversity which we hope reflects the needs and makeup of our congregations and which we hope serves both our regular congregations and the many who occasionally attend from the wider community. We look at points which may have been raised from others outside the committee as well as those raised by committee members.

During the past year we have considered the logistics of large services such as the Lighting of the Christmas tree and looked at ways of ensuring that it runs smoothly. We considered whether a third such service might be needed, but concluded that it would be very difficult to both staff this and to accommodate it within the time available.

As mentioned previously we have now moved the Taize worship on the fifth Sunday evening into the North Chapel – and this seems to be a better place than the nave.

This past year has seen the usual services which happen at regular points throughout the church year – and also the special service held to celebrate David's ministry with us. During the interregnum we are continuing to look at all the services which we have as normal, giving thanks that our human and physical resources ensure that the worship patterns established continue to go forward until such time as a new Rector is appointed.

*Bron Ferland
Secretary, Worship Committee*

Baptism Team

Baptisms at St Mary's have been down in numbers over the last couple of years (26 in the past year, compared to 29 in the preceding year) but all have been beautiful occasions. There was an occasion when three young children from one family were baptised together, each child with three godparents, and another

when a cousin living overseas was baptised at the same time as their cousin living locally.

This year, more than in any other since St Mary's has been offering baptisms within the 10am service and at midday, there has been an overwhelming preference for the midday option. In fact there has been only one baptism in the 10am service and that was in the November Family Service. I have a particular soft-spot for this service as there are always so many children grouped round the font and it was appropriate that this was the last baptism at which David officiated at St Mary's.

Rachel has been the officiant at nearly all our baptisms this past year. She has a wonderful way of making everyone welcome and making it joyous too!

As often seems to happen we have one summer Sunday that proves to be exceptionally popular. This year it was 30th June when we had two baptisms at midday, followed by two at 1pm.

We also had one 'Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child' service. This is a lovely option for parents who would prefer to let their child decide when they would like to be baptised.

As always, my thanks go to the other members of the team, Kathryn, Diana, Sandra, Pamela and Noel for their support and to Jenny Cottam who kept the Register and wrote the certificates for so many years. Also to Dawn in the Parish Office, Joan and Tessa for making and labelling the teddies given to the newly-baptised children, and all those who lend a hand on baptism Sundays, moving chairs and handing out Order of Service sheets.

Lesley Lancaster

The Guild of the Holy Trinity

The Guild of Servers at St Mary's has existed for many years. It fulfils an important role in the liturgy of St Mary's. Members of the Guild, serve at the services of Holy Communion every Sunday at 08.00am and at either 10.00am or 11.45 Communion (after the All Age service) to support the presiding priest. We, the Servers, are conscious that, in assisting the priest at the Altar, we are also leading you, the congregation in worship. The Guild draws its members from all areas of the church family of St Mary's, and St James and St John's – the PCC, welcomers, sidemen and women, bell-ringers, the Baptism group, and others.

A server, with increasing experience, carries 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. 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 08.00am (1662) Holy Communion. A bigger group provide a team of a Team Leader, two Sub-Deacons and a Crucifer at the 10.00am Eucharist. This 10.00am Sub-Deacon Group has fourteen 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 responsibilities in St Mary's, or in other churches. To balance these various commitments, we ask members to serve only on Sundays when they are free of other church and/or family commitments. Therefore 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 me over coffee after the 10.00am service. We are happy to welcome new members.

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 day 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 will have supported twenty seven services since the Archdeacon's visitation service back in May 2019 through to Corpus Christi which is due to be held on the 11th June 2020.

Some of the obvious special services include Easter, Advent carol, Christingle and other Christmas services such as the two Lighting the Christmas tree services but other special services include Remembrance Day, All Souls, Holocaust Memorial Day, Naming of Jesus, Mayor's day, Ascension and Corpus Christi. Some of these services only requiring one or two Sidesman to assist the Wardens whilst others require significantly more. The Christingle and Advent carol services require as many as fifteen Sidemen some of whom have been trained to use fire blankets, and the fire extinguishers placed around St Mary's Church. They are also knowledgeable in the location and use of the numerous light switches which play an essential part in some of these services.

To cover Sunday and these special services we have, at present, forty-eight authorised Sidesman plus three authorised volunteers. As you can imagine these services require some logistical support starting from the publication of the quarterly service rotas that identify the times and dates of the planned special services, then we need to ascertain how many Sidesman will be required for each service. 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 assembled the list is passed to the Churchwardens advising them the team names and duties allocated.

So please when you are next visiting St Mary's for a church service and you are greeted by a welcoming smile, your service sheets and *Grapevine* already prepared for you or you have a question or require a helping hand, please remember our volunteer Sidesman are there to help you and to ensure your safety, please smile back and be thankful that St Mary's is so very blessed and appreciative of all our volunteer Sidesman.

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

Music

This will be the tenth report which I will have given on behalf of the church music at St Mary's. In this time, we have been simply blessed with strong clerical leadership which has been both hugely supportive, and full of insight in equal measure. This makes carrying out my music making duties in this environment such a hugely rewarding and stimulating joy. Musically speaking, we have arguably sung and played some great music, but occasionally the focus also needs to be on consolidation and ensured continuation. The period of interregnum is proving is proving to be just this. That said, I am pleased that the adult choir is running at capacity and once again running a short waiting list. At the time of writing, numbers for both the *Junior Choir* and *Joyful Noise* are also looking very healthy indeed. Brass group numbers are stable, though we do suffer from a lack of regular first trumpets. In September we gave a sad but hearty farewell to Graham (our Brass group Secretary) and Jenny as they moved to Scotland. Graham devoted many hours toward keeping the Brass group on the straight-and-narrow. The Brass group made a stealth appearance at their last service at St

Mary's. I am extremely grateful to Philip Dudfield who has kindly agreed to take over Graham's good work. Our Choral Scholars still contribute massively to our choir and continue to be a succinct teenage social group in their own right. Their annual concert in September always proves to be one of the absolute top occasions in the year. Their 2019 concert was no exception!

Current and former members of the choir have enjoyed some success this year: choral scholar George has been promoted to the National Youth Training Choir, James (Junior Choir) won first prize in the Saffron Walden Choral Society Carol Competition, William (Junior Choir) came a very respectable runner up. Peter Dockrill (former Choral Scholar) is now singing in the back row of the Chapel Choir of Kings College Cambridge, and Liam Goddard (former Choral Scholar) continues to sing with the choir of Clare College, Cambridge.

Elliot, our organ scholar continues to add much to our life, and has conducted and accompanied the choir on a number of occasions, regularly plays at services both at St Mary's Saffron Walden, and in Wendens Ambo. Elliot is now in his second year and will be coming to the end of his term at the close of this academic year. We will shortly begin the search for our next organ scholar. I sincerely hope that Elliot will stay in touch with us and will perhaps join the choir as a Choral Scholar for the duration of his secondary education.

Such is the amount of music covered in one year, it sadly isn't possible to itemise everything in this space. To pick out some highlights: in April 2019, we sang Bob Chilcott's towering *St John Passion* – this was a new undertaking and one which the choir appeared to like getting stuck into. The Passion also features five wonderful hymns which were incorporated into Sunday morning services in the weeks leading up to Holy Week. Such was the success of this, we decided to run the same work again this year. We also had two chorister weddings - which is always a highlight! The choir have also sung a relatively large amount of new service music including a number of new motets and anthems of varying proportions, and a new set of evening of canticles. It is always a careful balance between making sure that the original repertoire, or bedrock of the choral repertory is preserved, whilst also pushing forward and musically challenging ourselves. In November, we gave

David Tomlinson as best a musical send-off as possible. The brass group took a lead in this and played a number of new hymn arrangements along with a simply stunning version of '*Nun Danket*' by Karg Elert. Amongst other music, the choir also sang a beautiful setting of *Irish Blessing*, again by Bob Chilcott. The Christmas season came and went, and a massive quantity of music was covered by virtually all our musical teams.

We had another successful series of eight lunchtime concerts from late May to mid-July. I believe that attendance figures were lower than in previous years for the latter half of the season – but financially the concerts were within a few pounds of the previous year. The mixture of some new and some familiar programmes seems to work well. Our occasional series of four organ recitals drew reasonable audiences for four very different programmes.

Looking forward, we are planning a full choir visit to Birmingham Cathedral in June, an organ outreach concert in September, a fundraiser performance of the *Messiah* in October and a joint project with *Mencap/Side by Side*. I am also looking to establish a folk style band to support the family service – their first appearance will be at the March Family service.

Our church instruments are much utilised both by us and by a host of visiting musicians. The main church organ is now starting to deteriorate to the point where we seriously need to consider a plan for the way forward. The organs and pianos of the church are absolutely crucial to the essential functioning of our long held musical tradition and I hope to be in a position to report back more on this in the relatively near future.

All of the musical activities at St Mary's can only take place due to the hard work of a number of people. I would like to thank all the members of the SMMA for their continued support. The SMMA fund much of our music making and also provide a tremendous amount of support of virtually every kind. I would like to thank Peter for his pain staking maintenance of the church organ. To our wonderful librarians Margaret and Hilary who chase-and-cajole, shake-and-stir our choir into making sure that they have the right music at the right time. To Jeremy, my right-hand man, who continues to play, conduct and deputise and much, much, more. To Bron for all of her help, patience and oversight of much of the considerable admin that goes with a large set of choirs and ensembles - the task is almost

endless! To Rachel and other supporting clergy, and to Gill and Denis our Churchwardens who give so much of their time towards keeping everything in order and functioning amazingly smoothly in this time of interregnum.

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. This year saw the first significant work on the bells since the refurbishment in 1962. In brief, in conjunction with the only remaining bell foundry in the UK, John Taylor of Loughborough, the clappers were refurbished and some fittings updated. Work on the clappers was carried out at the bell foundry whilst the on-site work was undertaken and totally funded, at a cost of £5,000, by our ringers.

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 on all but one Sunday during 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 Ashdon, Hadstock, Ickleton, Radwinter, West Wrating and Saffron Walden.

Another highlight of the year was hosting at Saffron Walden and entering a band in the 12 Bell competition between towers in Essex and Suffolk, the *George Pipe Trophy*, held on 16 February. In 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 along the Stour Valley from Long Melford to Stoke by Clare.

On 16 November members of the Society rung a peal of '*Cambridge Surprise Maximus*' as a farewell tribute to Rev'd Canon David Tomlinson. For those not familiar with bell ringing, a peal is the ringers' equivalent of a marathon requiring great concentration and stamina and takes about 3 hours and 20 minutes to ring at St Mary's due to the weight and number of the bells.

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

There is nothing on earth like 'doing the Church flowers.' It is never stressful or hurried, for the flowers won't be hurried. They took their time in growing, and demand we take our time in placing them in whatever container they are to be displayed.

In the act of placing flowers in church we are expressing our care and love for the church. It is not only the major festivals of Easter, Harvest, and Christmas, but all the weeks in between when they are seen by the regular congregation and visitors.

I am happy to say that due to a recruitment drive a number of ladies have offered to do the North Chapel flowers - thank you.

Last year we had the flower festival '*When the Saints Came Marching In*' over the August Bank Holiday. This event was a resounding success raising £9,000 for the Building Fund. Exhausting work for Jane Knight for her vision in designing the festival and her assistant Pam. Thank you to all the arrangers.

My heartfelt thanks to the team for their loyalty and fellowship.

No men brave enough to join us yet.

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 Steve Hasler 01799 525041

Carolyn Mann

Prayer Team

It is with sadness that I write this so soon after Anne's sad and sudden death which has left a big gap in our team. My gratitude to and for Anne is for the many gifts that she brought to us in her quiet abounding generosity, faithfulness and wonderful creativity; most of all I appreciated her solid and caring friendship. This came with such wise and guiding fellowship to me from the moment we arrived in St Mary's, but particularly when I took on the co-ordination of the Prayer Team. In the many years that she has been worshipping in

St Mary's she has been quietly sowing the seed of faith whose growth and harvest will enrich St Mary's for many years to come. We give thanks for Anne and all that she has given us over the years.

The Quiet morning in November, led by David on his last Saturday, was typically generous, moving and poignant. He encouraged us to take seriously the call and need for the necessity of waiting in the Christian life. As always it was a morning of quiet challenge, insight and reflection. We left inspired and sad all at the same time! It was also a timely reminder and encouragement to us all as we wait for the new Rector to be selected, a long and time-consuming process, which we hope the monthly prayer evenings in the Parish Rooms will be preparing the ground on which hope, energy and trust are built so that "All will be well and all manner of things will be well" as Julian of Norwich so often reminds us. I am writing this in February which means we have only had two evenings, but the feedback has been positive and there seems to be a real desire for both the interregnum and the choosing of the new Rector to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Thy Kingdom Come is also a great Highlight for us. With Rachel leading us, we are excited at its growth with St Thomas Moore school joining in for a morning this year, movingly engaging with the all the stations. The other highlight was The Prospects Group joining us for a morning filling the church and gifting us all with joy and laughter. What a privilege it is to be part of this national and international movement. With these groups, parents are eagerly bought into the church by their children, after school has finished, to come, to see and to experience what they have done that day. We have heard and are addressing the sense that some of the congregation are feeling that they don't have anything put on for them. This issue is being addressed but these stations are designed to be all age prayer stations so do come and pray with them. The North Chapel is also kept as the Quiet Space. Evening Prayer on Tuesday evenings is now into its third year and we are encouraged by the faithful attendance and growing fellowship that is growing with around 8 people coming most Tuesdays. Alongside this and underpinning these evenings are the leaders who turn up faithfully to lead, each bringing their own way of doing it, thus giving us diversity within the liturgy

Finally none of the above would happen if were not for the Prayer Team; I remain inspired by them and grateful for them as we continue on. Wonderfully, Alan Currer has agreed to join us, which we are thrilled about, so that the Team now will be Joe Hordern, Judith and Mike Felgate, Hazel Colebrooke, Anne Rhodes, Alan Currer and myself. I count it a privilege to be among such faithful people who only ever want the best for St Mary's and as such we pray for the discernment and guidance on a regular basis!

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 7.30pm at *The Priory*, Common Hill. Newcomers welcome.

Tessa Hawkes

Coffee, Cake and Company

Coffee, Cake & Company began as a form of support for people affected by issues around mental health. Over the last few years it has developed to include a range of people who enjoy the opportunities they find within the sessions.

We continue to meet monthly, welcoming individuals who are there for diverse reasons, in an atmosphere of Christian love and trust. We enjoy some very interesting conversations and reflections on our experiences throughout life, we often have a laugh, and we always finish with a few minutes of prayer and a hymn.

Marisa Baltrock

Prospects

For the last 4 years a small but dedicated team from St Mary's have been fortunate enough to visit the day centre on Audley Road to provide a specialist monthly service for a group of adults with learning disabilities.

The service is full of lots of fun things to do, including singing, storytelling and craft. The group love to sing and we have noticed that even the most severely disabled members are brought alive by music. We sometimes take along instruments for them all to join in, but we are very thankful for accompaniment by guitar whenever John Saxon joins us. We always start with the same song to

welcome everyone and we use Makaton signing to go along with this song. This year we have also put together a little hymn book with a variety of simple hymns that we regularly use. The familiarity helps everyone join in, even if it is just humming along to the tune.

We usually focus the service on the Bible reading that we have had at the family service that month, but this year we have also put in some old testament favourites like Noah's ark and Joseph. We tell the stories from the Bible in many different ways, including something along the lines of Godly Play, some drama sketches and using pictures or objects to bring it all alive. Then we think about what that story means for us today.

Finally, we really get down to having some fun and start on a craft activity. This 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 bunnies out of old socks, decorations and Christmas trees 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 extremely talented when it comes to drawing, so we are always keen to give them ample opportunity to show off their talents.

This year we have also looked for opportunities to have the group join us at the church. Our *Thy Kingdom Come* prayer stations was an ideal opportunity to do this and everybody had a great day working their way around the different prayer stations that were available and looking around the church generally. The group also enjoyed coming along to have a look around the flower festival, which was stunning!

It is an absolute joy to play a part in running this service. It honestly gives us so much more back than we ever put in. As well as the amazing attendees, the staff at the centre are a real gift. They always make us all feel very welcome and join in with whatever activities we have planned no matter how messy! We can't thank them enough for all of their support. It is wonderful to see how God is working in this community and the blessings that are evident in their lives, and we look forward to seeing how these develop over the coming year.

Tracey Nicholls

Home Groups

We are very encouraged by the continued growth and development of the home groups at St Mary's. 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.

At the moment there are seven groups officially connected with St Mary's, three of which were set up in the last year and a half. It is encouraging that these new groups have been able to sustain themselves and flourish, and we hope that they will continue thrive.

The Home Groups now have a website page, which is updated as and when the groups have space for new members or change topics. At the moment, the groups are covering topics that range from: the Gospel according to Mark (Monday evening); early Christian letters for everyone (Tuesday morning); the Second Book of Samuel (Tuesday morning), the Sunday Holy Communion Bible readings (Tuesday evening) and the Psalms (Thursday evening).

Over the next few years, developing the home groups within St Mary's needs to be a key priority as part of our vision to learn and live out our Christian faith. 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. Our hope is that all who seek to learn more about Christ and want to get to know others from the church have the option to do so within a home group.

We will also continue to develop links across the other churches in the town and within our Team Ministry, by sharing opportunities to learn more about faith. Our Lent leaflet advertises the *Churches Together* Lent talks with the other churches in Saffron Walden, as well as groups in Hadstock and Seward's End. We hope that this will continue beyond Lent, and St Mary's will continue to support other opportunities to learn in the villages, such as through attending the *Pilgrim* course in Debden and Wimbish. Each of these groups provides opportunities to meet and encourage other local Christians and to learn from one another.

I'm grateful that over the course of my maternity leave, Alan Currer will have responsibility for oversight of home groups. Many thanks to all the leaders, hosts, and group members for their

investment in this ministry. May these groups be places where we can grow ‘to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (Ephesians 4.13)

Rachel Prior

Book Group

St Mary’s Book Group aim to discuss a varied range of books at their monthly meetings. These are chosen by the members of the group, and cover both classic and modern fiction and non-fiction of various kinds. Over the past year, for example, four books set in the United States have been discussed, including *Educated*, a memoir by Tara Westover describing her journey from a fundamentalist upbringing to academic success at Cambridge and Harvard, and novels dealing with slavery, race, and the challenge of affording health care in old age. These all provoked lively discussion of the issues they raise. But the group also enjoyed two novels of social comedy set in the mid twentieth century, *Cold Comfort Farm* and *I Capture the Castle*, and Amor Towles’s light-hearted fantasy, *A Gentleman in Moscow*. As classic novels, Anthony Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds* and Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* offered differing views of the nineteenth century. The group also discussed Bill Bryson’s biography, *Shakespeare, Millions Like Us*, describing the role of women in the Second World War, and Neil MacGregor’s illustrated account of what it is to be a German, *Germany: Memories of a Nation*.

The Book Group meets monthly at 4, Castle Street, at 8.15 pm, with coffee and tea—and in winter a log fire. Details of the date of the meeting and the book to be discussed are published in the Grapevine. Membership is open ended and new members are welcome.

Robin O'Neill

Social Committee

Firstly a big thank you to all who contribute their time, food preparation and cake making skills to support this important part of our church life.

As a group we supported the Agape Supper in January and the refreshments for the Epiphany Service. The Easter events of the March of Witness and the Easter Eve supper in April, and of course our big event, the Flower Festival, in August. This was a huge

undertaking in hot weather but it was a pleasure to provide warm hospitality to the many visitors who came to St Mary's. We were all exhausted by the end but none more so than Gill Lovegrove who organised it all for us so well. ("Never again," I heard her mutter!) We made a very useful sum of money for the Buildings Project and had a lot of fun to boot.

The Christmas Fair in November is always a big date in our diary, and this year we were reassured by the installation of the new cooker in the Parish Rooms kitchen. We had no problems with cooking and heating, and thank you again to all who worked so hard to make the day in the 'Starlight Café' a success. We have a great team who provided popular home cooked food for our visitors.

Family Services have also been supported by the provision of brunch after the service. A small group of helpers provide this on a rota basis. Vegetarian, gluten free and dairy free options are always available at our events, and we trying to be more mindful of allergies and individual needs.

We are currently looking forward to carrying on with our regular events in 2020, and to supporting the interview days for the new Rector. Hopefully before too long we will be able to organise a welcome event for the new incumbent and their family whoever he or she may be.

Thank you to Carolyn London for her work last year leading our committee. A busy life regrettably caused her to step down, and I have taken over the coordinator role.

Sue Birchall

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee has had another busy and successful year.

The most visible outcomes of the Committee's work have been the successful re-launch of both the Church web site and the *Parish News* magazine and the commissioning of a well-received new Christmas card.

Martin Hugall put in a great deal of work to ensure that the updated web site is easy to use and full of information about all aspects of St Mary's activities. Martin has ensured that it has remained so since the re-launch in January 2019. We have had

feed-back that St Mary's now is seen as having one of the most all-embracing Church web sites, with praise that its contents are always so up-to-date.

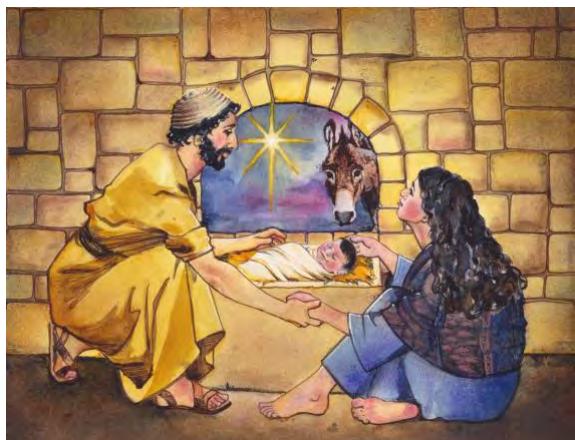
The re-launch of *Parish News* saw St Mary's embark on a project that has brought us into the 21st century. The magazine can now be accessed in electronic format via the church web site, as well as in the traditional hard copy, four pages of which are now in full colour. However you choose to read it, *Parish News* is now provided free of charge. With the PCC's full support the magazine is now seen as part of the church's outreach to the town, with copies made available via the tourist office and the library. The project has been led by Rev'd Andy Colebrooke, the new editor, who succeeded Rev'd John Sibson, who had decided to stand down after many years of faithful service.

Our sincere thanks go to John for his past work and we welcome Andy into his new role.

In 2018 the church distributed its first full colour Christmas card, making use of the design of the Millennium stained glass of Mary and the infant Jesus. In 2019 we commissioned a design from one of the church members, showing the Holy Family. It was distributed by hand throughout the town – an increasingly difficult task given the number of households now in Saffron Walden. It may prove necessary to consider other ways of undertaking this task, and the distribution of the Easter card, in future years.

Our on-going task is to keep the church leaflets under review and up-to-date. We have decided to minimise changes during the inter-regnum so that the new Rector has an opportunity to consider whether (s)he wants more significant changes once (s)he is in post.

Press releases were prepared by our Press Officer, Clifford Want, and were generally well taken up by the local press. We



continue to have regular updates on the church Facebook site, thanks to the work of Riina Driscoll.

A review of the Terms of Reference of the Committee was undertaken and signed off by David Tomlinson. Diocesan Social Media Guidelines were approved by the Committee and later by the PCC; they have subsequently been formally signed up to by St Mary's.

My grateful thanks go to all members of the Communications Committee whose hard work is undertaken largely behind the scenes.

*Rufus Barnes Chair,
Communications Committee*

Parish Office

The Parish office always seems to be busy with many visitors, church and the general public alike, not to mention the many phone calls and emails that we receive every single day. We exist to serve St Mary's Church and the Team Villages ministry but hopefully we are also we are a blessing to the many people whom we assist, help and signpost.

The photocopiers are always on the go, and we copy our weekly newsheet *The Grapevine*, service sheets, leaflets, letters etc. In addition we order essential church supplies for St Mary's and the team village churches including candles of all sizes and for special occasions such as Advent, Christingle and Easter Paschal Candles.

We look after the hiring out of the parish rooms to church groups and outside hirers. This is on the increase so it is good to know that our parish rooms are being used more and more. We also keep the diary for church hires, which can be anything from local schools holding their Christmas services here to Community Choirs and Symphony orchestras as well as many SMMA events that are held throughout the year.

A BIG THANK YOU to all our wonderful volunteers who help in the Parish Office, your help is invaluable and as a church we thank you. Also a 'Thank You' to all of you who belong to St Mary's for your support in many ways.

*Dawn Saxon
Parish Administrator*

Weddings Coordinator

In 2019, there were 20 weddings: 14 at Saffron Walden, 2 at Great Chesterford, 2 at Wimbish, one each at Ashdon and Hadstock and two wedding blessings at Saffron Walden.

Two choir members were married at St Mary's - Sam Gray and Hannah Harpum in July, Jim Butler and Yvonne Huang in August. Also, choir members David and Diana Hoy's daughter Bryony married Mark How in September.

We were of course sad to see the departure of David and Jenny Tomlinson who both conducted such special and personal weddings. Rachel took her first wedding in April 2019 and has engaged so brilliantly with wedding couples so she will be missed too as she goes on maternity leave.

I am grateful for the support of Alex Jeewan, Paula Griffiths and John Saxon who help in so many ways and also Judith Hasler and Dawn Saxon on the administrative side.

Caroline Goulder, Wedding Coordinator

Children and Youth Committee

Since the last annual report we have met termly as usual, but without Alison Knights who stepped down from the committee and also without Charles Cowper who completed his year as Pastoral Assistant last summer.

This year T3 has stopped for the time being, with the idea that there will be the odd special event aimed for the families involved (lower primary aged children).

Tinies is currently trialling meeting on a Tuesday morning as it was becoming apparent that the Tuesday afternoon slot wasn't working as well as in the past.

Team JC continues to meet each Sunday in term time and numbers have varied greatly throughout the year.

Aftershock has gone from strength to strength in the past twelve months and held an incredibly successful meal in January to raise funds for Jimmy's Night Shelter in Cambridge.

For much of the year a Bible study group for youngsters of secondary school age has been held on a Wednesday after school.

Matt continues to support groups both at St Mary's Primary School and at the County High School.

Joyful Noise (our youngest singing group) are growing in number and meet for ten sessions each term. They have sung at some services in church this year, including the Christingle Service.

The Junior Choir has remained almost at capacity (or even sometimes just over!) throughout the year. The Juniors went to sing the morning service at Hadstock in July last year. They were very warmly welcomed and really enjoyed the opportunity to sing in a more intimate environment where it was very obvious that their contribution had impact. In St Mary's they are always at one remove from the congregation and perhaps feel that they can let the adults and choral scholars take over! The Choral Scholars have numbered between eight and ten this year and form an important section of the senior choir. As a group they have really drawn together and absorbed easily the two youngsters who have joined them over the course of the year.

Margaret reports regularly to the committee on the activities of the uniformed groups: Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and the Senior Section.

All groups make use of the Parish Room facilities – without these youth work would be very difficult indeed.

As a committee we discuss plans with each other regularly and are, of course, responsible for seeing that the safeguarding requirements of the PCC Safeguarding Policy are properly implemented. We are all, as group leaders, still finding it hard to have a ready supply of responsible adults willing to come along and support our activities. We cannot continue to offer all that we do to the young people associated with our church without this vital support, and we regularly find ourselves appealing to others to offer to commit time to these ventures. Please, if this is an area to which YOU might be able to give support, do speak either to Matt as our Youth Worker, Oli as Director of Music, or to me as Committee Chairman.

Bron Ferland Chair, Children & Youth Committee

St. Mary's Tinies

After running for more than 25 years on Tuesday afternoons, St Mary's Tinies has recently moved to meeting on Tuesday mornings which seems to be attracting larger numbers. We now open the Parish Room doors at 9.30am and welcome our Tinies and their

parents or grandparents with tea, coffee, juice and toast, which has proved very popular with children and adults alike.



We spend about 45 minutes playing, chatting and enjoying a craft activity before clearing some of the toys off the mat so that everyone can join in with a short age appropriate service which includes songs, instruments, a Bible story and prayers. In the autumn term we looked at stories from the Old Testament including Creation, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel and Jonah. In the spring we are learning about the life and miracles of Jesus.

We don't make any charge for Tinies, but encourage small donations to charity. This year we were able to pass on about £80 in support of *East Anglian Children's Hospice*.

I am extremely blessed to work with such a fantastic team, recently re-joined by Gillian Brace since our time change. As well as several toddlers, we are delighted to welcome quite a few new babies to the group, including our own 'home grown' Joshua Williamson.



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.

We have sadly said goodbye to Carolyn Seal who has moved onto pastures new but welcomed a new member of staff Samantha Dodd.

A big well done to Chantelle who has completed her Elklan training. This training is to support children with speech, language and communication needs. 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 tv/film characters. Although it rained fun was had by all! We played games, ran races and had a picnic on the field. We sadly said goodbye to all our families whose children were moving onto 'big' school.

We continue to strive for learning opportunities for children and staff and we have now started an application to become a Makaton Friendly Setting. This is being supported by Maxine Fenwick, our Makaton Regional Tutor.

We have been 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

In September 2019, St Mary's Primary School welcomed Chris Jarman as their new permanent Head Teacher and said goodbye to the Acting Head, Fiona Reid. Mr Jarman has been warmly received and is already making a positive impact on the school. Since his start the school has participated in a number of pupil enrichment activities. Early in the year, there was a visit from STAR radio to record a Christmas song; Year 3 sang Christmas carols at Jubilee Gardens and there has also been the 'Get Caught Reading' initiative where the school has compiled a number of photo boards of pupils and staff members photographed whilst reading their favourite texts. There are some lovely pictures of the school community reading up trees and on swings and in some most unusual places!

The pupils in Year 6 made St Mary's School incredibly proud by achieving strong SATs results at the end of the summer term. However, it wasn't all hard work as the pupils also enjoyed a sunny sports day; Year 5 and 6 got the chance to enjoy an entertaining week on their residential where they tried challenging activities such as canoeing and archery. Furthermore, the youngest primary pupils were excited to attend the Key Stage 1 Athletics Event at R. A. Butler, where they all took part in lots of fun activities including the sack race, running relays and jumping and throwing events.





More recently, the school was sorry to say goodbye to David Tomlinson as Rector and Governor, his presence will be greatly missed at St Mary's. The school wish yet again to say a huge thank you for the PCC grant, which, as always, is very much appreciated and

put to good use to purchase resources such as R.E books and Light and Harvest Festival resources; it has also helped to enable less advantaged students to attend school trips, which all helps to raise the school's Christian Distinctiveness and makes the school the special place that it is. Over the Christmas period the school initiated a Kindness Calendar, where pupils were encouraged to engage in at least one kind act per day, highlighting to the pupils the school's Christian values. On a more serious note, the school has had to start providing breakfast for some of the less affluent pupils and has been working hard to find ways to do this in a caring and tactful manner, so as not to embarrass pupils or parents.

The school is continuing to raise extra funds for charities. In June, St Mary's pupils took to the streets to pick up litter to raise awareness about plastic pollution. The pupils supported the local food bank with a reverse advent calendar in December. There have been events to raise money for the school with the Christmas Fair, Pyjama Day and a much looked forward to PTA Quiz Night. The money raised by the



PTA is going to be spent on new equipment for the school playground and to repair roof damage caused by recent storms.

*Victoria Boraster-Sharpe,
Chair of Governors*

St. Mary's Guiding

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

The St Mary's Rainbow unit continues to be full and we have a long waiting list. The last year has been somewhat of a transition as Guiding has introduced a new programme. The Rainbows now have the same programme as the rest of Guiding at a suitable level so the activities are more structured with the girls working towards more badges than before. We have completed our Communicate and Explore badges so far and we are doing an agility badge this term. We have also fundraised for Cancer Research by doing a sponsored skip. We are looking forward to taking part in the Carnival later in the year.

Alison Alderman, Rainbow Leader

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

We have had another busy year and now have a full pack of very eager Brownies. We made the most of the lovely weather in the summer and spent a lot of time outdoors ending with an enjoyable pack holiday at Skreens Park near Chelmsford at the beginning of July. The pack holiday gives our Brownies an introduction to sleeping away from home, learning new independence skills and having fun. Since September we have been using the new Girlguiding programme which the leaders are still getting used to and is much more structured than the old one. In the Autumn Term the girls worked towards and achieved their First Aid badge while this term they are learning about and practising leadership skills. We have just got back from another successful pack holiday in Newmarket where we thought about Guiding Round the World and did several crafts from different countries.

Julie Lester

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

This has been a year of transition for the Guides. Unfortunately, Sophia was unable to carry on as leader owing to family bereavement. I have taken over the unit and am hugely grateful to

Julie and Saffy Lester who have stepped in to help. In the summer the girls worked towards their Camp badge which included tent pitching and outdoor cooking. They were able to put their skills into action by attending a County overnight camp in Hainault in September. In the Autumn Term they spent an evening looking at plastic pollution and sent letters to our MP suggesting ideas for action to stop it. They also worked towards and achieved their Innovate badge. This term we are looking at Life Skills which include budgeting and organising an event. The girls are really enthusiastic and eager to get involved in all activities.

Margaret Jacobs

Rangers

Leadership has been a major issue for the Rangers this year since I took over the running of the Guides. They have managed to carry on, organising their own activities, and are keen to continue as a unit. They completed their Camp badge during the summer and we used the money from a Jack Petchey award to hold a pottery painting workshop and buy some table-top stoves as cooking is a favourite activity. I am aware that I am unable to give them the attention that they deserve and more help is urgently needed.

Margaret Jacobs

Mothers' Union

The Mothers Union theme for 2019 was 'Listen, Observe, Act in Step with God'. The year began with the AGM in February when the Committee were appointed. Nicola Williamson gave us a talk on the Stort Valley Schools Trust whose aim is to bring the Gospel message to young people in local and area schools. This resulted in St Mary's MU becoming a prayer partner to the Trust.

WORSHIP: Each year in Advent and Holy Week members attend St Nicholas Church in Berden for a service of meditation by the Revd Margaret Davis. The peace and beauty of the church helps us to focus on these important church festivals.

On Ascension Day the Rev'd David Tomlinson presided over our Deanery Festival Service when we welcomed our curate Rev'd Rachel Prior as our guest preacher. In September, we welcomed Rev'd Cilla Hawkes from Stansted and Dunmow Deanery as our guest preacher at a Communion service in the North Chapel. She is a great favourite with us all.

OVERSEAS LINKS: 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.

SPEAKERS: Our president, Judith Meaden, was invited to speak in March about the Mothers Union theme (see above) and its implications for our members. There were interesting accounts of holidays in Bermuda from David Sheath and Kerula in Southern India from Gwynneth Nicholas. John Read gave us a very interesting historic tour of the church and David returned in November to speak about memories of living in Wiltshire.

SOCIAL OCCASIONS: Members enjoyed delicious strawberries and cream at our garden party in August, by kind invitation of Joe and Gwynneth Nicholas and also enjoyed a Christmas party at Custerson Court by kind invitation of the manager.

We have a small choir led by Janet Sutherland and each year in March we lead the singing at the Women's World Day of prayer service.

We also have a monthly prayer group by kind invitation of Mrs Sheilah Girgis-Hanna, when we pray for MU members at home and overseas and our Church.

Brenda Sheath, Branch Leader

Women Who Wonder (WWW)

This group for Christian women met 10 times on the 2nd Tuesday of the month in the last year to discuss, listen, learn and support one another. We have covered topics as diverse as the Prison Fellowship & flower arranging, a Taize service and Bible study. We have a core number of 6 but all women are welcome to come to one off sessions.

Gill Caswell

Men's Activities

The men's activities have continued 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 four group activities – Saturday Breakfasts, Suppers, M5 Wednesday Pub Lunches and Saturday Walks.

Saturday Breakfasts

Our 2019 programme of four breakfasts at the Kings Arms, Market Hill opened on 9th February with guest speaker Rev'd John Goddard, Minister of Saffron Walden Baptist Church who gave us an illuminating insight into the history and constitution of the Baptist ministry under the intriguing title 'Baptist Postcards'.

For the second, held on 16th March, our old friend Rev'd David Sheppard, Assistant Curate at St. Mary the Virgin, Ware, returned to give us an account of his journey of faith from agnostic teacher to ordination at St Alban's Cathedral.

Sadly, the third breakfast of the year, programmed for 15th June, was cancelled due to lack of support.

Our speaker for the fourth breakfast of the year on 12th October was our Rev'd Alex Jeewan, Team Vicar, Cam Valley Churches, Great Chesterford, who gave a most engaging talk entitled 'Nick Drake – a Lost Son Comes Home', alluding to the parable of the Prodigal Son.

All three events held were well attended up to the maximum number of 24 that the premises can cater for.

At the time of writing, we have yet to embark on our 2020 breakfast programme which commences on 25th April with our guest speaker, Sarah Jorgensen.

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 2019, varying the day of week to make the event as widely available as possible. Nevertheless, conflict with other commitments has affected attendance, numbers having reduced on previous years, fluctuating between 6 and 10.

Our programme during 2020 took us to The Mogul on Friday 25th January, The Yuva in Debden on Thursday 28th March, The Jade Garden on Friday 24th May and The Crown in Little Walden on Saturday 16th November, when we bid a sad farewell to Rev'd David Tomlinson.

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 2020 programme of three Suppers commences on 26th March at The Crown, Little Walden.

M5 Wednesday Pub Lunches

Our M5 (derived from St Mary's Men's Monthly Midweek Meet) lunchtime get-togethers are now entering their 8th 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 2020 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.

Personal circumstances impacted on attendance numbers this year but the event still routinely attracted an attendance of between 9 and 13. On Wednesday, 4th December, when 12 attended in festive mood, we celebrated with a delicious full Christmas lunch.

Saturday Walks

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.

The soggy landscape around Walden in November meant the cancellation of the walk but on the other five days a walk took place.

In January we returned to Wendens Ambo and followed the well graded paths in a figure of eight to Littlebury Green and back, concluding with lunch at The Bell.

In March we took the downs walk from Chrishall around to Elmdon and back to the Red Cow

In May, starting from Arksden we walked over to and around Clavering Lakes before lunch at the Axe and Compasses.

In July, remembering the hot sun of previous years, we gathered in Hatfield Forest to ensure we had some cover, but the sun didn't shine. We lunched at the Cock in the Broad Oak.

Finally, in September, we reprised the one way walk to Great Chesterford, this time stopping at and visiting the churches at first Little, then Great Chesterford. We then increased the numbers on the No 7 back to Walden for lunch at The Temeraire.

We invite members of St Mary's as well as the other team churches to join us on the second Saturday of every other month from January. The walks are in no way daunting, all they require is a stout pair of shoes that will last around 5 miles of our wonderful terrain.

Anthony Armon-Jones

Finance Committee

The committee continues to monitor the finances of St Mary's on behalf of the PCC and met three times during the year. The membership of the Finance Committee comprises Rev'd Michael Lovegrove, Chairman (who replaced Stephen Wood who stood down at the end of the previous year), the Church Wardens and the Treasurer (all ex-officio) together with Steve Hasler and Robin O'Neill. During the year three other members left the committee, namely, The Rector on his departure to Birmingham, Jenny Cottam on her move to Scotland and Michael Dix on his retirement. We were pleased to welcome Simon Potter and Alun Thomas as new members.

The routine business of the committee is unchanged:

- To receive reports from the treasurer on the current financial position;
- Consider any changes to our investments;
- Consider requests for immediate or future expenditure which need authorization 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 reserves policy.

From a financial perspective 2019 was a better year than planned. Having set out with a small deficit of £3,399 (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 and a £50,000 legacy. Also a further legacy of £20,000 was received into the Fabric Fund. Once again, our Christmas Fair delivered in excess of £6,000.

The on-going challenge of funding the buildings project has been made considerably easier with the legacy mentioned above. Little progress was made during 2019 as extensive discussions concerning the protective railings around the Audley Tomb have taken longer than anticipated. It is hoped that momentum will be resumed following the appointment of a new Rector.

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 £199,000 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 2020 is expected to be around £262,000, a shortfall of £3,100 of the budgeted expenditure.

*Reverend Michael Lovegrove
Chair, Finance Committee*

Property Committee

On behalf of the PCC, the Property Management Committee looks after the Church, Parish rooms, Verger's cottage and the Curate's house in De Vigier Avenue.

While routine maintenance and servicing has been carried out during the year, two major pieces of work are worth highlighting.

The five-yearly electrical installation inspection and replacement of failed bulbs in the nave and chancel was carried out in June. A suitable cherry-picker was no longer available locally and, thanks to Mike Felgate, one was brought from Diss in Norfolk. We must also

thank Steve Hasler and Clifford Want who manoeuvred the cherry-picker round the church. The inspection of the lights, which were installed over 30 years ago and cannot be converted to LED, has shown that they will need to be replaced before the next inspection in 2024/25. This will be a major project which will enable us to install much more sympathetic and cost-effective lighting.

In January 2020 an electricity smart meter was installed in the church by British Gas and as a result of the failure of the contractor to follow correct procedures, substantial damage was done to our boilers and heating system and to some other electrical installations in the church. Liability has been accepted and remedial work completed. We were particularly thankful that we were blessed with mild weather when the heating was not working. We are very grateful to Steve Hasler who has led our response to this problem and overseen the remedial work.

I am very grateful to the members of the committee – Lawrence Gooderham, Robin O'Neill, Richard Freeman, Mike Felgate and Steve Hasler – for their wise counsel, knowledge and experience.

*Denis Tindley
Chair, Property Committee*

Buildings Project

At this time last year, we were hopeful that the work to refurbish and move the Audley tomb to the east end of the north aisle (where the servants, pews are currently located) would be completed during 2019. We were concerned that in the interests of safety the old, spiky railings should not be replaced.

DAC visited in June and agreed the railings should not be reinstated and that the handrail should be extended down the south side of the tomb. However, they did not like the proposed, rendered brick support for the headstone of the tomb and suggested a more modern design for a support using steel with a handrail which would echo this. DAC's views were suggested to the architect and the restoration expert and the restoration expert was initially unhappy but following further discussion he also agreed that the railings do not need to be replaced, that there should be an extended handrail down the south side of the tomb and that the rail itself should be in keeping with the tomb and its surroundings. Possibly a metal handrail like the one up the pulpit stairs with support posts that also match. The architect and restoration expert were both unhappy with

DAC's suggestion of a steel support for the headstone due to the need to fix it below ground at depth and involve archaeology, and the need to either drill into or clamp the ancient and significant headstone to the support. A metal support is likely also to require re-consultation with Historic England and the Church Buildings Council.

The architect has provided a paper explaining his thinking and this will be discussed at a site meeting with all interested parties which it is hoped to arrange in the near future.

Some preliminary work has been completed on the refurbishment of the clergy vestry, but this has been put on hold until the Audley tomb has been moved.

Sadly, Graham Cottam, who project managed the Buildings programme from its inception eleven years ago, moved from the Parish in late summer. With his leadership he brought substantial skill, knowledge, experience and enormous persistence. The west-end reordering, which has been greatly admired, is testament to his commitment and mastery of detail. Thank you, Graham.

*Denis Tindley on behalf of the
Buildings Project Team*

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

The Friends continues its work here in St Mary's with several minor projects completed. The Sewing Circle continue to produce their excellent kneelers and a further 10 were dedicated at the Friends Service in September.

The new Friends Banner Stand was made by Glendale Forge and was dedicated at the Patronal Service in September and now stands in the South Chapel area proudly displaying our banner made by the Sewing Circle.

A re-print was carried out of the "History of St Mary's" book due to excellent sales, aided by extra sales at the Flower Festival.

Further replacement kneeler hooks have been installed throughout the Church.

The Friends have funded two new carpets in the nave which have been made to match the pew runners.

A coach full of members visited Peterborough Cathedral and Museum in June last year and with the help of glorious sunshine had a great day. We plan to visit Lincoln Cathedral in June this year.



The Spring newsletter continues to be produced highlighting the work and plans of the Friends. Copies will be available on the Friends Bookstand.

This year at our AGM we said a fond farewell to our President David Tomlinson and took the opportunity to thank him for all of his work and support to us during his 11 years at St Mary's.

Pamela Mugliston

Transition Project

During 2019, the Transition Project continued to welcome a steady flow of clients, seeking employment help and advice. There were some new and some old friends and on average we still saw 2-3 people each week (84 consultations during 2019, with 7 visitors the highest total on one day) and continuing at a similar rate in 2020. Our help includes 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. For some clients we suspect it is just 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 including 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, sometimes at the request of the CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau).

An Employer Adviser from JobCentre Plus, Braintree, continues to keep contact. 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. He also informed us of plans to open a Job Centre at the Council Offices in Saffron Walden, perhaps one day a week or fortnight. This seems to have occurred with, we believe with one person on duty on Tuesdays, since we have had a client who told us he was referred 'from the Job Centre'. We also continue to make referrals to and receive them from the Citizens Advice Bureau. We have recently discovered there are also other help agencies, operating part-time from the Council Offices. These include the Department of Work and Pensions (Braintree Office), a joint advice service from Uttlesford Housing and an organization called Peabody, and 'Uttlesford Frontline'. Some were unaware of the Transition Project but all now have our publicity leaflets.

During the autumn we lost our convener, Graham Cottam, who has moved away and the team now has six 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.

*Noel Starr on behalf of the Transition
Project Team*

Jimmy's Group

Jimmy's provides 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 £823.01 in regular donations. This has been spent on vegetables from the market and donations given directly to Jimmy's.



Our Christmas Envelope Appeal raised £706.50 (A big thank you to Judith Felgate for the Christmas noticeboard). This was spent on sleeping bags which are always in need for Jimmy's severe weather provision. Gift Aid donations were given directly to Jimmy's.



Aftershock, our youth group of 11 to 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 shared information about the work of the charity and what difference the money raised would make to the lives of those they support. The super effort put in by the Aftershockers raised a whopping £3,905 for Jimmy's.



We would like to thank you all for your continued generous support of Jimmy's.

Tim Game

Archive Group

Every year we seem to submit the same report for the Archive Group as we still don't as yet, have a home for the Archives.

Having said that, we do still exist and when the time comes hopefully we will be ready to gather together all the archive material that needs to go into a secure home and be available for anyone who wishes to view it or use it for research. Until then we will continue to meet and also apply ourselves to planning for the annual Heritage Day activities when we can mount displays in the church.

We were pleased with what we were able to achieve on Heritage Day last year when amongst other activities in church we remembered members of the Christian community who, since the Nineteenth Century had done so much philanthropic work within our country.

We hope also that readers of *Parish News* have 'enjoyed' reading what was being printed in *Parish News* at the beginning of the Second World War.

Once **again**, we would ask all parishioners who might have interesting pictures and other materials that should be preserved to make sure we as a group are not forgotten, thank you.

*Canon Chris Bishop
On behalf of the Archive Group*

ECO Church

The Eco team was set up last spring by Rachel Prior to see if we could attempt to become an Eco Church. As such, we are on a journey towards reducing our carbon footprint as a church and as a congregation. Eco Church is run by the Christian environmental charity A Rocha and takes five key areas of church life into account:

- Worship and teaching
- Management of church buildings
- Management of church land
- Community and global engagement
- Changing the Lifestyles of our congregation and parishioners

Our hope is to reduce our carbon footprint as a church and as individuals in order to show that our environmental concern is rooted

in our Christian faith, our stewardship of the planet and our concern for social justice.

We started with a Silver score for our Worship and Teaching in church but had low scores on the others, with particularly low scores for the management of our Land: 0/155 and Lifestyles: 5/160.

In the course of the year, however, we have:

- Improved our recycling and purchasing systems;
- Negotiated a reduction in the Town Council's mowing regime in the churchyard, drawing up a plan for wild flowers and a more diverse habitat for insects, bees and small mammals;
- Planted 500 daffodil bulbs and 250 snowdrops, with primroses and cowslips due on Mother's Day;
- Established an Eco Team notice board and published articles on the Climate Crisis in every edition of the Parish News;
- Set up a section on the church website which includes practical lifestyle tips as well as allowing users to track our progress;
- Engaged with the new UDC councilors and Kemi Badenoch MP to express our concern about environmental degradation.

As a result, our scores now merit three Bronze awards in four of the five categories: Buildings, Land and Community and Global engagement to complement our Silver in Worship and Teaching. A tremendous achievement!

It looks as if changing everyone's lifestyle needs to be the big push this year, starting with a talk by Edward on 30th April in the Church Rooms at 7.15pm on 'How my circumnavigation of the world turned me Green'. Do come along!

We are just a small team, so would welcome anyone with concern, enthusiasm or who would like to champion God's creation in all aspects of church life. Please contact Edward Gildea, Jackie Damary Holman Holman or Chris Knight to share your ideas and find out more.

Edward Gildea

Links with the Worldwide Church:

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

The highlight of the year is still probably to come as we are preparing for Lynn's visit to us on Sunday March 15th and I am writing this in February! That said Lynn's letters followed by our prayer evenings for her and the work she does are a highlight in themselves. In the last email she sent us for our prayer meeting there was the news that she had been ordained a Deacon in the Maridi Diocese which she was excited about as were we! There was an update on the cheque they received from our last lunch with Anne Tutt which meant that two Ugandans that had come and were crucial to the running of the secondary school. Receiving our cheque meant Chaima could keep them on. It has taken a while to get to Chaima but I am just relieved and grateful that it has arrived and been put to such good use.



For me another highlight is working with such a committed and energetic group of people some of whom have been missionary's themselves; so for me I am both challenged by their commitment to mission and their trust in God and inspiring stories. Some have been here and supporting other CMS Link Partners over the years and have taught me how to be a partner! So huge thanks go to Sheilah Gergis-Hanna, Jenny Kirkaldy, Brenda Sheath, Judith and Mike Felgate, Judith and Steve Hasler and Graeme; without you there would not be any link partnership to CMS. The Southern CMS Conference is becoming another annual highlight where we hear various speakers share their mission journeys; opening our eyes up to myriad of possibilities, as well as making us aware that all of us are called to be Christ's light in this world and not to dismiss what God is doing through us. Similar to Lynn's letters we always come away inspired, hopeful, challenged, glad we had gone and tired! It is a very full weekend, constantly meeting and learning from everyone who is there.

By the time you read this you may have come to Lynn's presentation, heard her being interviewed in the morning service or been with her when she spoke to Aftershock. If you want to join us in supporting her and being a link with her then please do contact me at suewalker619@btinternet.com.

Sue Walker, CMS Link

Lynn with the newest member of the Chaima Community!



David and Sári, serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Romania

David and Sári's work on Bible translation and education amongst the Roma has continued throughout the year. One major task was to prepare the first half of 1 Samuel in a South Vlax Romani language. In addition to the translation work they help in creating audio-visual materials for the Roma who are frequently illiterate and have an oral tradition.

David's computing skills are also being tested in administering the team's database of contacts, Bible translation projects and dialect data. Maintaining a Romani Scripture website (ashunledevles.eu.org) so Roma and missionaries can have access to written, audio and video materials for evangelising and discipleship, add to his workload.

Sári also taught some of the local Roma children to read. She then prepared lesson materials, and trained teachers for an NGO-funded reading project for the Roma in a nearby village. The response of one child was "I learnt more with you than in four years of school."

Soil movement and shrinkage due to irregular winter snow and rain seem to have been causing the brick foundations of the oldest part of their house to move and the wall crack, since it was built over 100 years ago. A few years ago they strengthened the wall with long tie bars. However, the local builders never came back for the

second phase of the project: to buttress the top of the foundations. Wanting it done, and unable to find anyone willing, evenings and weekends were spent hand-digging six 1m x 1/2m holes, one to two meters deep, plus a full-length buttress along the 15m long wall of the house with the problem. The whole family was involved in this project, which demanded soil shifting but also reinforced concrete mixing and pouring in a very confined space.

Mark reached a critical stage in his education this year. Progress to university is competitive and strictly based on Baccalaureate and entrance examination results. He gained entry to his preferred university in Cluj about 60 miles from home and has settled in well in a small Christian based accommodation unit. He has since successfully passed his first “end of semester” exams.

Aniko is progressing well in her secondary school, working towards her Baccalaureate in 2021. Emma will be taking her final junior school examinations in the summer which determine her



secondary school programme. Erik continues to do well in the junior school.

Both David and Sari have some ongoing health issues which cause some concern and need our prayerful support.

Financially, they had a 6% shortfall in their funding in 2019.

As always, they maintain a welcoming household, support the local church and community and would welcome visitors.

Gerald Gardner

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.