

Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2025

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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.

PCC Secretary's report and introduction

This year at St Mary's seems to have passed quickly and has gone well. Denis Tindley retired from the PCC at the last Annual meeting, having served the church well over many years including chairing the PCC during the interregnum; we are very grateful for all he has done. At the same meeting, Vivian Falk was elected Churchwarden, along with Simon Potter. Patrick Li, Bill Rose, Jan Siewertsen and Pam Russell were elected again as their assistants. We thank them for their dedicated work. Clifford Want, who has served so faithfully as Electoral Roll officer is retiring from that role at this year's APCM, and we thank him for all he has done. Patrick Li, Bron Ferland and Hannah Razzell were elected as PCC members for another three years. Gill Caswell, Anna Martin, Shawn Martin and Richard Freeman were elected as Deanery Synod reps. During the Autumn, our Youth Worker, Matt Williamson took up a Diocesan post and moved away, and Rev'd Lynda Sebbage joined us as Team Vicar of Debden and Wimbish.

We have had five meetings of the PCC this year, which were all convened lawfully. During the year we discuss and take decisions on many issues, including setting the church budget and monitoring finances. Following Matt Williamson's departure, the PCC have been working on defining the role of how we can best serve children and youth in future. We are also working to improve safeguarding routines and training, and are grateful to Nathan Colley for taking the lead in this area as Parish Safeguarding Officer. Regarding property matters, we are addressing the issues of the cracked bell, lighting, the organ and notice boards.

The help of our Team Administrator, Anthea Slater and our Associate Administrator, Claire Dunn, in the production of the Annual Review and throughout the year is much appreciated.

I have very much enjoyed reading the reports in the Annual Review pamphlet, which reflect how active our community is, and

demonstrate the joy we get from worshipping in St Marys and the love that we share.

*Anna Martin PCC Secretary
stmaryssaffronwaldenPCC@gmail.com*

St James' Church, Sewards End

Nothing dramatic to report upon as regards 2024 but then again the Pro-Wardens do not want too much excitement at our age. As of recent years our congregation has remained pretty much consistent and if anything has increased a little, albeit mostly from the same pool of parishioners.

Our church feels a real part of the community and there is a great sense of camaraderie which of course is reflected in the way in which things get done since there is always that extra help or support when needed. We certainly miss Matt with the Youth Club but have been able to continue with the support of volunteers to whom grateful thanks are due. This can only be a temporary measure and we hope that St Marys will be able to find a way of replacing Matt.

Coffee mornings remain well supported and the social importance and outreach that is provided cannot be overstated. Thanks to the ladies that organise this event.

Our services have been much the same as in prior years. Perhaps one welcome change has been a return to the shared chalice at Communion services which seems to have been received without controversy in St James. Our Harvest Festival Service was well attended and which enabled a fair amount of food to be delivered to Uttlesford Food Bank. The Remembrance Service was as usual a moving event with local soldiers in attendance and the wreath being laid by Eileen Webster in her 99th year. An amazing lady. The Carol Service and the carol singing by the village hall were well attended and are firm annual favourites. We did not hold a midnight service on Christmas Eve based on dwindling attendances over the last few years but had

a good turnout for Christmas Day. We suspect that format will continue since no complaints were received.

Sadly, we lost 3 members of our congregation during the year. Although Adrian Wright, Kathy Lester and Marjorie Reid were no longer regularly seen at St James because of their great ages, they will be fondly remembered by us all. May they rest in peace.

We did not have any christenings or weddings during the year but the attendance on Christmas Day records the presence of a well behaved black labrador - a first for St James as far as we know.

Not much to report on the fabric side other than mostly just maintenance. We did have some water ingress through the wall having run over from a blocked gutter. This was unblocked and moved further from the wall. The kitchen exterior door suffered some rot which we had repaired but other than those items and regular maintenance there were no fabric issues. We have continued to hold a good monetary sum in our fabric fund since we know that some parts/pitches of the roof will eventually need re-tiling. The garden is under control but some work on related structures will be required in the coming months or couple of years. However those costs will not be difficult to account for when the time comes. The land belonging to our neighbours on our north boundary has been tidied up by them and is now far less of a maintenance issue. So all is well in the garden.

We remain grateful to Chris Bishop and count our lucky stars we have him to be our guiding light. Our thanks are also due to Judith Hasler who is our temporary organist of several decades !!! Good job she's not counting – except hopefully of course in her capacity as Treasurer. Finally thanks go out to all the Committee who do so much to ensure the Pro-Wardens look compos mentis.

Mike Dean and Lynne Ketteridge - Deputy Wardens

Contact St James via st Marys Parish Office - see endpapers

St John's Church, Little Walden

This has been an exciting year at St John's, with new members on the church committee and a new purpose in facing the challenges of the Quinquennial report. We have been strengthened by God and continue to build on the foundation of his love to nurture his church in the village.

In Our Church: We continue to be blessed with the service and wisdom of Micheal Lovegrove and Tracey Nicholls. Ill health meant that Micheal had to have a break from leading for a while, but we are very pleased to see both him and Gill back at St John's. We have introduced open air services which are Forest Church in style but are held in our church yard. These have been very popular, and we look forward to continuing them in the coming year. Our indoor services have been enhanced by the purchase of a baby grand piano, which was purchased through generous donations and was used at Christmas for the first performance of the Little Walden Carol.

It is said that a village church reflects the life of the village, and this has been true at St John's this year. We gave thanks for the life of one of our oldest members, who reached the amazing milestone of 100 years of age as well as the baptism of the youngest member of our congregation.

In Our Village: The Good Friday selling of homemade Hot cross Buns on the green has become a welcome way to celebrate Easter with the whole village. We have led the Remembrance Day service at the war memorial and our "Tommy" silhouette is standing proudly by the War Memorial until the VE day celebrations. This year we held a Harvest Community Brunch before our Harvest Festival service, the monies raised went to Uttlesford Foodbank.

This year to mark the 5-year anniversary of the Covid lockdown we opened St John's to provide a place of reflection and peace

for those who had been affected by the virus. This was well received and led to some beautiful uplifting moments for those who attended it.

In Our Wider Community: St John's continues to give 30 percent of its income to various charities, and we are very grateful to the generosity and financial commitment of all our congregation. This generosity has allowed us to continue to support our chosen charities, Self Help Africa and Farm Community Network.

Fabric: The Quinquennial report has focussed our work at St John's this year, with two major projects being undertaken. The first is the replacing of blown brickwork, which has been partly financed by a Sponsor a Brick campaign. This was launched in January with a Burn's Night Supper and has raised a substantial amount of money towards the cost of the work. We are also in the process of replacing the old gas heating with more ecofriendly electric heating. This will, hopefully, be completed before December 2025.

We have worked together with the village hall committee to maintain the trees and hedges around the church and carpark, and we now have a regular gardening company to come in and keep the church yard looking smart. We are working with them to stock the beds so that we have flowers for the whole of the year. Going forward: we continue to be mindful of our ecological impact and try to use our resources wisely. As a church we are building on our relationships in the community living in and through Christ to support our friends and neighbours in the best way that we can.

Helen and David Nash (Pro Wardens)

Service Planning Group

The Group met four times during 2024. Its work focuses on the logistics of 'special services' as well as advising on wider changes to liturgy to plan services during the year and then

review them after the event. Services covered in these meetings included the following:

A new monthly children and family service – Wiggle Church – started in January and was successful in attracting families from the Tinies Group

The Holocaust service was very powerful and well attended by many local schools

A rich range of Easter services, generally following the pattern of previous years with some refinements. Palm Sunday fell on Family service day and included a lively procession around the church. Sadly the hoped-for donkey didn't make it. Footwashing replaced handwashing at the Maundy Thursday service which was felt to be more inclusive. Archdeacon Kate Peacock gave a powerful reflection for the Hour at the Cross on Good Friday. The choir's devotional offering was a beautifully sung Fauré Requiem. At the post Easter review, it was suggested that the choir's traditional musical offering might be moved to Palm Sunday in 2025 so that there would be no services in church between the Hour at the Cross on Good Friday and the Dawn Communion on Easter Day.

In June, we held a special service that focussed on the prayers for Living in Love and Faith that are being introduced by the Church of England. There was an encouraging attendance at this service including friends from other churches in the town. The service was well-received, giving food for thought. Jeremy and Ella gave us a good model of how to address difficult subjects on which there is disagreement, whilst remaining united as brother and sister in Christ.

Our monthly team modern worship service, Living Stones, continued with a summer tour around the village churches before returning to St Mary's in the autumn.

In September, we discussed the distribution of communion as many churches returned to receiving wine from the chalice. It was felt that, in general, but particularly at the larger services, we should continue with intinction of wafers by the priest, to protect the health and safety of the more vulnerable members of our congregation.

The Remembrance Day service was simplified and shortened by removing the Act of Remembrance (which duplicated the ceremony at the War Memorial). The planning of the logistics for big services like this is an important part of our work and we are mindful of the large numbers of young people who attend this service. Words and Music with Compline provided a special ending to the day.

We provided a full programme of services for All Souls, Advent and Christmas and it has been a joy to see the congregations attending these large services returning to pre-Covid numbers.

Jenny Kirkaldy has been a loyal member of the group and the preceding Worship Committee for many years. Our thanks to her for all she has contributed as she retires.

Judith Hasler

Baptism Team

The last twelve months have seen 15 baptisms at St. Mary's. Unusually 7 of these formed part of 10.30 services, with the other 8 being 12.15 services. The baptism 'season', traditionally the summer months, was slow to get going but spilled over into the autumn, with our last baptisms for the year in early December. There have been no baptisms so far in 2025, but we have just taken a booking for April and have others in the diary for June and July.

Hilary officiated at her first baptism service in May and then baptized 4 siblings, in one service, later in the year. I was so sorry to have missed both occasions.

At one baptism there were so many family and friends attending that the baptism was switched to the nave so that everyone could have a seat.

My thanks, as always, to the other members of the team, Pamela Mugliston, Kathryn Bennett and Sandra Marsh and others who have ensured that these baptisms have run smoothly.

Lesley Lancaster

Welcome Teams

Another busy year for the Welcomers both at the regular 8am and 10.30am services and all the Special services throughout the year.

The whole team enjoy their time meeting and greeting both our regular congregation and newcomers and visitors. They understand the importance of a smile and a friendly greeting.

On medical advice I resigned from all Special service co-ordinating on 31st January although Vivian Falk, our Church Warden, took over the Christmas Special services this year. Vivian is a very busy lady with all her other duties and is actively looking for someone to take on that aspect of my job.

The Welcomers rallied round and came forward to help at all the services, most of them being regulars at these services and know the ropes. There are lots of tasks to add to the meet and greet duty although some of those will be eased when the new lighting is in place.

We look forward to another year of meeting and greeting and helping in any way we can and I will still be there on a Sunday morning.

Contact: Pamela Mugliston

Sunday morning Welcome Co-ordinator
pjmteddybear@btinternet.com
or Vivian Falk Church Warden (until the post is filled)
vivian@brackendalehouse.co.uk

Music

It has been an eventful year, and for the first time since the Covid Lockdown in 2020, I feel that our musical forces under the age of 18 are finally starting to get back to their pre-covid numbers. This is really encouraging to see. I recall that there were head-in-hand times during lockdown when I feared the worst for church music and for our community.

I will run through a brief resume of each of our choir divisions:

Kate Beare writes, "Joyful Noise has settled at a core of 10 children over the past year. We meet on Friday afternoons for singing, percussion and musical games, usually for 10 sessions per term. The children, aged between 5 and 7 years, have grown in confidence and are enthusiastic and quick to pick up new skills and songs, volunteering for solos and leading rounds. We joined the Junior Choir to sing for the Harvest Family Service in September '24, and again for Christingle in December. During Spring Term '25 we rehearsed and performed a mini-musical, The Musicians of Bremen, and a very good time was had by all. My thanks go to Ruby Parsons for her support with refreshments

for the children each week, and Poppy Razzell who is such a good role model for the children; their help is invaluable, and we are a happy team!"



Musicians at an Advent service

Huge thanks go to Kate Beare and all who support her in running this group. Kate works tirelessly to create stimulating and

musical environment for our youngest budding musicians.

The Junior choir is currently full, and they are an absolute joy to work with! They have continued to sing at a full complement of services, and there have been times when the Junior Choir led the top line for major services – for example, the confirmation service and other family services. They are well-knit and lead their own musical rounds on week-by-week basis. Poppy, our current head chorister has been sterling in modelling exemplary behaviours and leading by example. Role models for the younger singers, particularly, are essential for the continued healthy functioning of a choir which learns and performs music at a high frequency. My thanks go to all who support the Juniors: to Siong siong Butler and to Bron Ferland for their weekly support, and particularly to Alison Lawrence, who, as social coordinator has provided countless activities, games and social functions over the year.

The choral scholars now number 10. Although this is encouraging in its own right, their commitment and enthusiasm this year has also been very strong throughout. They form an integral part of the adult choir, and their presence, musically speaking, really shines through. They work and play hard, and continue to be an amazingly important part of the choir. My thanks go to Lewis Colley for his new role in supporting this fantastic group of individuals. I would also like to thank Noel Star and Ellie Beare for their help this year.

The adult choir has once again seen some comings and goings and we waved a very sad farewell to Rowan and Sue Sylvester-Bradley towards the end of 2024. Sue and Rowan sang in the choir for many years and were stalwart supporters of virtually everything musical. Sue was a wonderful and talented Soprano and Rowan sang bass. Rowan also ran the choir tick list - no small feat! Ellie Beare left the choir in March to explore pastures anew in Devon. Ellie began her journey at St Mary's in the Junior Choir under the baton of the illustrious Andrew Malcolm. She later became a Choral Scholar, before heading

into the Adult Choir. Ellie was for many years also a Choral Scholar mentor. In addition to being a talented and versatile musician, Ellie had many other strings to her bow, including helping to organise the choral scholar evenings, and carol singing. We keep Sue and Rowan in our hearts and think of them often and wish Ellie all the best in the next exciting chapter of her life. Looking forwards, the adult choir is shrinking, and whilst this isn't an existential problem at this point in time, we would be wise to consider ways of recruiting one or two new adult members of our community. Currently, we have vacancies particularly for sopranos. My thanks go to Jim and Siong Siong Butler and Margaret Jacobs for their continued support in serving as choir librarians.

Musically speaking we have divided our time between consolidating our repertoire from previous years and learning a range of new repertoire. Within the last year, the choir have learnt, amongst other things, the following new repertoire, much of which was written in the 21st century:

Ave maria - M. Martin

A great and mighty wonder – J. Whitbourn

O nata lux – K. Andrew

Veiled in darkness – G. Rudolph

For lo, I raise up – S. Stanford

In August 2024, the choir were thrilled to commission a series of new motets from the composer Brian Moles in memory of Chris Ferland (former chorister at St Mary's). Paula Griffiths very generously wrote a set of poems which form the textural basis of the pieces. The motets are titled 'The Spark Motets' and reflect on the 'spark of life'. They are scored for choir, organ and obligato euphonium, and we are hugely looking forward to starting preparation on this project. The titles for the individual motets are as follows:

'Praise Our God'

*‘God, Who Set This World In Motion’
‘Love Called For Light!’*

Alas, there is not space here to talk in-depth about the numerous services and musical highlights over the year, though one highlight, the choir trip to Norwich cathedral in October 2024, was a great experience for all and the choir did St Mary’s proud in leading choral evensong in his historic significant and spiritual building. Thanks go to Peter De Vile and Caroline Goulder in organising this trip. We look forward to visiting Bury St Edmunds Cathedral in October this year.

Our current organ scholar Ziyi has been simply brilliant this year and she is now playing for large parts of the Sunday services. Ziyi has given us so much over the last 20 months and she is starting to set her sights on university organ scholarships. Ziyi will give a short recital at St Mary’s in June – she has made such great progress, and I think that the recital will be tremendous. Ziyi has demonstrated a commitment to both the choir and her own organ studies which is exemplary, and we wish her the best for her future studies when she moves on from St Mary’s at the end of July. Over the next few months, we will be looking to appoint our next Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar.

The brass group continues to play for the Easter, Christmas Fair and Carol Services, though is now fully running on an occasional basis. My thanks go to Phil Dudfield who played the tuba and facilitated this group for many years. Although Phil has stepped back from organising this group, I am pleased that Phil will stay involved by playing the euphonium and continuing to act as librarian.

My thanks go to Peter De Vile for continuing to maintain our aging pipe organ. The statement of needs is complete, and we hope to push this forward in a meaningful way over the coming months.

This past year has also yielded a bumper crop of concerts, which have helped support the work of the SMMA, and also encourage an increasing number of people into the church, which has been most rewarding.

Thanks to Peter De Vile, we were fortunate enough to welcome the incredible Jonathan Scott to give an awe-inspiring organ recital: Jonathan and his brother, whose YouTube Channel has 70 million views, even uploaded a video featuring St Mary's and Saffron Walden as a result!

We have hosted three very successful series of recitals: the Summer Lunchtime series, followed by the Autumn and Spring Coffee Concert series. Audiences are increasing and word seems to be spreading, which is wonderful. The performers vary from being our own local 'home-grown' talent, to up-and-coming professionals who enjoy airing a programme prior to higher-profile concerts; we receive many requests from performers asking to be invited again - a testament to our church community.

We hosted a 'Music and Poetry' evening which was a departure from our usual events, and which drew a different crowd. We were very grateful to Philip Sunderland for giving his time and expertise to direct Purcell's Dido and Aeneas for us in our Come and Sing: the event was highly enjoyed by audience and participants alike.

We once again invited local primary schools to attend our Organ Outreach Concert which was great fun; the audience was treated to an arrangement of Peter and the Wolf, and also the famous finale from Widor's Toccata on no fewer than three organs!

Thanks again to Peter De Vile and Caroline Goulder we were thrilled to welcome the Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, who performed a truly marvellous and inspiring concert for us. It has been wonderful to see the church as a focal point in our community throughout all these events.

We would like to thank the SMMA who work tirelessly to support the many musical activities that we do. To Bron Ferland for her continued admin support, and to Patrick Li for his enormous help over the course of this year. To Gill Gibson, who keeps all our robes in order. To Jeremy Allen, our amazing Assistant Organist who has continued to play with panache and who does an amazing job in mentoring our organ scholar on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis. He is a joy and pleasure to work with!

Lastly, I would like to thank Jeremy Trew and the clergy team for their continued generous support over the course of the year.

Oliver King, Director of Music

Hannah Razzell, St Mary's Music Association Chairman

Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers

The Society has 20 members many of which are loyal and longstanding and ring for services nearly every week both at St Mary's Saffron Walden and other churches in the local area.

The year started very much as normal. We made plans for Great Ringing Day, the annual tower outing, ringing for weddings, visiting bands, peals and quarter peals. But, on Tuesday 28 May 2024 the joyous sound of St Mary's church bells came to an abrupt end when the 7th bell cracked.

The Cracked Bell The seventh bell of the full peal of 12 developed a crack on the sound bow that travelled up the waist of the bell for approximately 25 cm. This destroyed the tonal quality of the bell similar to a cracked wine glass, making the full peal of 12 bells no longer viable. The 12-bell peal at St Mary's Saffron Walden is a nationally significant heritage asset used fully by both local and visiting ringers. Losing the 7th bell severely limits the use of the bells. Without the 7th bell we can no longer produce a 'true' sounding ring of 12, 10, 8 or 6 bells.

The 7th bell is one of the ring of eight cast in 1797/1798 by John Bryant of Hertford from the voluntary subscription of Lord Braybrooke and the inhabitants of Saffron Walden. These bells form the core of today's full peal of 12, one of the finest in the country. The 7th bell weighs in at 340 kg (6.5 cwt in old money) and in common with all bells is cast in bronze.

Our plan is to recast the bell, tuning it to be musically a close match to the 1797 bell and reusing the original bronze, keeping a strong connection with the original bell. At the June 2024 PCC meeting it was agreed to establish a small group to lead the repair project and assess the options. The working group have now proposed that the bell is re-cast rather than repaired by welding. A Faculty to recast has been granted and detailed work is now in hand to carryout the work together with other much needed work within the tower.

Ringling for Services We rung on all the Sundays during the year with attendance varying from 5 to 12 people. For most Sunday mornings we rung either 6 or 8 bells. We also rang for most of the second Sunday Evensongs. We rung for 7 weddings and 2 funerals.

Peals and Quarter Peals There was only one peal and 4 quarter peals rung during the year, much lower than the norm due to the cracked bell.

Great Ringing Day Great Ringing Day was held on 29 June and, due to the cracked bell, there was only limited ringing at Saffron Walden. Instead we started the day by ringing a quarter peal at Bishop's Stortford and in the afternoon rung at towers in the south of Cambridgeshire.

Tower Outing The tower outing took place on 14 September and was a train and walking tour starting near Liverpool Street Station and ringing at towers along the route of the Central Line.

*Stephen Wood, Secretary, Saffron
Walden Society of Change Ringers*

Home Groups

Greenways Homegroup In the last year we have adopted a variety of approaches including looking at some key New Testament words, and then getting an overview of the first letter of St John. We had a very enjoyable evening sharing our favourite hymns and why they are important to our faith. During Lent we found much to reflect on in Graham Tomlin's book *Looking Through The Cross*. We currently have room for one or possibly two new members.

Andy Colebrooke (andy.colebrooke@gmail.com)

Church Flowers

The flower team have arranged flowers in church throughout the year, with the exception of Lent and Advent.

We are a very small team and are getting older.

New members would be warmly welcomed with help given.

Finally a big thank you to the team for the loyalty and fellowship we share whilst doing the flowers.

For interest, I am a member of the Church of England Flower Arrangers Association which was founded in 1981 in the Liverpool Diocese. The aim is to help and encourage all those who tend flowers in church and use talent to enrich places of worship.

Contact Pam Russell pamrussell02 @talktalk.net

Sewing Group

The sewing group goes on as ever. Seven to ten of us meet every Monday morning at the Priory from 9.30 a.m. until 11a.m. We have not been very productive over this last year...(could it be due to Age I wonder). The general standard of our work, both design and stitching have improved since Mary Duxbury joined us and that all takes more care and time and enthusiasm too.

No banners or pulpit falls this year but we are embarking on a handsome red cover to disguise the fold up table just inside the South Door. Otherwise no change and we greatly enjoy our Monday morning start to the week.

If you have any requests, please contact Tessa Hawkes
01799 523888 *Tessa Hawkes*

Prayer Team

We remain a small team, now missing the wisdom and encouragement of Brian Kerrison, who joined us for a short time last year. He is sadly missed, both by us and the wider congregation. We are pleased to have added Vivian Falk to the team and already appreciate her thoughtfulness and hard work.

Our team continues to encourage and assist both the congregation and visitors to the church in prayer. As in previous years we provide a monthly prayer for the Parish News, update the Prayer Diary bi-annually (available on the church website and in paper form at the back of the church), and create a prayer space in church to mark Thy Kingdom Come, which takes place between Ascension and Pentecost each year. A new initiative this year has been the introduction of occasional Prayer Spaces by the south door of the church on various themes, which have been created by Tricia Troughton, assisted by other members of the team. At our Quiet Morning at the beginning of Lent we welcomed Archdeacon Kate Peacock for a time of thoughtful and challenging input, with plenty of time for reflection on a perfect spring day. The morning was rounded off by the opportunity to share soup (courtesy of Vivian!) and sandwiches together.

I would like to extend my thanks to the whole team (Gill Caswell, Vivian Falk, Tricia Troughton and Hilary Walker) for all their hard work, enthusiasm, creativity, generosity and prayers throughout the year. We will continue to pray for God's church and the world in the coming year, as we encourage others to join

in prayer with us. After all, it has been said that “Prayer is the breath of the Church”!

Hazel Colebrooke

Julian Group

We have changed our timing from 7.30pm to 9.30am on the second Tuesday of every month. This was to avoid being out in the dark and it has worked well. Otherwise we go on much the same as for the last 50 years, somehow enjoying(and certainly needing) that bit of silence in one another’s company. Both the simplicity and the space and time to exchange thoughts are very rewarding.

For any information please contact Tessa Hawkes. 523888

Tessa Hawkes

Book Group

St Mary’s Book Group continued to meet every month to discuss books chosen by its members over tea and coffee and with a log fire in winter.

We began and ended the year with espionage: first Oleg Gordievsky’s successful escape from the Soviet Union in Ben Macintyre’s book **The Spy and the Traitor**, and then, to conclude, an account of bungled British spying in Spain in 1941, in **Winter in Madrid** by C J Sansom . Fascination with books was covered by the centuries’ old history of a rare Jewish prayer book found in war torn Bosnia, in **People of the Book** by Geraldine Brooks, and the investigation by two young British academics of the life of an (imaginary) celebrated Victorian poet in A S Byatt’s **Possession**.

Cuddy by Benjamin Myers described the life of St Cuthbert and the long road his remains followed until they were finally interred in Durham cathedral. There was romance in a High Church London parish in Barbara Pym’s **A Glass of Blessings**, and in A G Macdonell’s **England their England**, which also describes the funniest cricket match in fiction. To round off the story of a varied year we read, too, the shocking account of the murderous exploitation of an oil-rich American Indian tribe which

led in effect to the creation of the FBI, in **Killers of the Flower Moon** by David Grann, and, for Christmas, Dodie Smith's **101 Dalmations**.

Robin O'Neill

Communications Committee

There are 7 of us on this committee (Clifford Want, Anthea Slater, John Pickthorn, Lewis Colley, Patrick Li, Simon Potter and Martin Hugall). We meet 4 times a year and minutes of our meetings are tabled at PCC meetings. We were sorry to lose Liz Lingley who has been on the committee for many years and has who has been our press officer in the past and minutes secretary since 2018. Her professional approach and wise contributions to our discussions have been valued and she will be much missed.

We also said goodbye to Andy Colebrooke who has been editing our new style Parish News of his design for the last 5 years, introducing colour, making it free, and available online – which was particularly appreciated during the testing times of the pandemic. It was a difficult act to follow but has been seamlessly taken on by John Pickthorn who is also injecting some new ideas of his own. Our printing costs are substantial, and we rely on advertising revenue to cover these, and many thanks to Patrick Li who has worked hard to increase our advertising. It would be easy to just have an online edition but there are many that really appreciate the benefits of a paper copy and we plan for this to continue. If you know of a business that could advertise in the Parish News do let us know. Details are on the website.

We revisited our terms of reference which included facilitating the flow of information both internally and externally by press releases, website, social media, notices around the church and the various church guides and leaflets that often need updating – and we now have a Ukrainian guide and have updated our German guide. We also aim to increase communication between the PCC and parishioners and understand that our summaries of PCC meetings in the Parish News are much appreciated.

Many thanks to Lewis Colley who, with his technical skills, has helped to get our Facebook page relaunched and to Hannah Razzell who does a splendid job in keeping this updated. Do visit us at facebook.com/stmaryschurchsafronwalden and like, follow and share posts. At the moment we have 139 followers but could do with more.

Clifford Want has continued to do an impressive job as our press officer and his many press releases have ensured that St Mary's is regularly featured in the local press. We are also grateful to the Walden Local for publishing all our press releases in the run up to Easter and Christmas. We have again been happy to join with the other churches in Saffron Walden in joint adverts of our Christmas and Easter services, as this not only saves money but brings us closer together.

Our external notice boards need to be replaced. We have been working on an up-to-date design using weather resistant materials which has been approved by the PCC. We now have to find a firm that can carry out this work and seek approval from the Diocese and planning bodies. Thanks to Jim Butler for his help with the design, and with the stand alone display boards that are also being replaced; the latter with the financial backing of the Friends' of St Mary's.

I have been busy keeping the website up to date, as it is increasingly being used as the first point of call to find out what is going on in church. Google Analytics indicate that it is well used by visitors; about 17,000 hits over the year and the 15 most popular pages in order have been: the Grapevine, Calendar, Services, Christmas Services, General Election Hustings, Hiring the Church and Parish Rooms, Music, Sunday Services, Who's Who & Contact, Parish News, History and Guides, Choirs, Latest News, Lighting Project and Weddings.

Thanks to Patrick Li for his help with the website and in particular for ensuring that the Sunday sermons are recorded and uploaded. We are especially grateful to Steve Hasler and his team for livestreaming a service each week and uploading them to YouTube. This is particularly useful for those who are not able to get to church and we have learned that a local care home regularly watches these. Thanks also to Clifford Want for keeping our CofE's 'A Church Near You' website up to date.

Finally, many thanks to Anthea Slater who provides a vital link with the Parish Office and who has done much to increase the lettings of the Parish Rooms.

Martin Hugall - Chair, Communications Committee

Contact Martin Hugall website @stmaryssaffronwalden.org

01799 527 805

Parish Office

It has been a busy year as always, in the Parish Office.

We have such fantastic support from our army of volunteers who give up so much of their time to help out. We would not be able to achieve as much as we do without our wonderful team behind us.

We will be looking to have a spring clean and huge re-organisation of the Parish Rooms this year, to utilise the space more effectively, and, to hopefully ensure that we meet the needs of those that regularly use the Parish Rooms.

Surveys will be sent out later in the year to Parish Room hirers so please ensure that you give us your feedback.

Contact 01799 506 024 Anthea Slater, Parish Administrator Claire Dunn, Associate Administrator

Weddings Coordinator

In 2024, there were 20 weddings – 10 at Saffron Walden, 4 at Debden, 3 at Gt Chesterford, one each at Wenden, Hadstock and Wimbish and one wedding blessing at Saffron Walden.

Pam and Jan were vergers for all the Saffron Walden weddings last year, two of which proved to be challenging in terms of crowd management but they coped admirably and I am grateful for their support.

We look forward to 16 weddings this year and were pleased to host the marriage preparation course in February for 14 of these. The two who couldn't attend will receive individual marriage preparation with their officiating minister. Thanks, as ever, to Anthea and her team for helping produce all the material for this special day for the couples and generally being a great support in the office.

I am delighted Ella has been appointed Team Vicar of the Cam Villages ministry. I look forward to continuing to work with her in the future. She has a special quality in providing a very personal wedding which the couples appreciate very much. It is also good to welcome Lynda and Hilary to the team.

It is now ten years since I was appointed Weddings Co-ordinator. I have learnt a lot about the process of managing weddings and I am less terrified at ensuring the correct preliminaries are arranged. There is a different process for couples who don't live in the parish, for non-UK and non-EEA nationals, for those who are UK nationals but are living abroad when their banns are due to be read etc so it is vital that I keep checking the regulations which change from time to time. I continue to feel privileged to prepare couples for their weddings and enjoy getting to know them as they go on their journey towards marriage.

*Caroline Goulder, Wedding
Coordinator
Contact office 01799 506 024*



Young people at DTI

Children and Youth

Tinies Tinies meets on Tuesday mornings during term time. We sadly said goodbye to Pam Russell after many years of being a valued member of the team. And obviously farewell to Matt as he moved on to work for the diocese. Each week several babies and toddlers come accompanied by mums, dads, grandparents and carers. We have many toys, buttered toast, crafts and always finish with a short service of songs, prayers and stories. It is a great privilege to watch the young ones develop ready for preschool/nursery.

Tinies Team

Sunday Club Each Sunday we meet in the Parish rooms. The children's age can vary between 2 and 11. Numbers are still small but hopefully will grow (prayer please for the numbers to grow). We have a story, sometimes enacting it out, treasure hunts, crafts, colouring, word searches. There is a board near the North Chapel. Check out what the children have done. Most of all please

pray for our youngsters and leaders and our journey in the Christian life.

Gill Caswell

Youth Bible Study Since Matt's departure, YBS has continued to be a joint venture with the Community Church, led by Katie Boyce. I have been able to attend about once a term and have thoroughly enjoyed the sessions led by the young people. They seem very engaged and we all enjoy the games which are also part of the session.

Hilary Walker, Team member

St. Mary's C.E Primary School

It has been another busy and successful year for the school. All year groups were full and the walls in the classrooms and corridors were jam-packed with excellent examples of pupils' work, photos and artwork. Our six core values; perseverance, truthfulness, friendship, respect, trust and compassion and our three core skills: effort, respect and safe were reinforced wherever you looked.

Here are a few of the many news highlights.

Governance This year we said goodbye and thank you to Gill Gibson for her sterling work on the Governing Board. Her legacy of promoting curriculum, inclusion and safeguarding activities in the school is much appreciated by her colleagues. In Gill's place we welcomed Ralph Meloy onto the Board. Ralph is a regular member of our congregation and brings a wealth of experience to the team.

The Governing Board is always looking to improve its ways of working and this year saw the creation of two new committees: Finance & Premises and People & Pay (FPP) and Curriculum, Safeguarding and Inclusion (CSI). Each governor sits on one of these committees and this structure has generated real focus on these important areas.

In order to play their strategic role it is important that the governors really get to know the school and how it operates. To

help this happen we hold Governor Days three times a year where governors visit the school for a whole day sitting in classes and talking to staff and pupils to get their opinions of life at St Mary's.

Bishop Roger's School Visit

In the previous year we listened attentively to Bishop Roger's interesting and amusing speech and joined in with the blessing prayers.



Bishop Roger visits assembly

We made a significant change to the fabric of the

building by adding two new cabins at the rear of the school to house a new library and much needed meeting rooms which could be used for 1:1 pupil support. News of this success story reached Bishop Roger and he agreed to make a visit to the school to bless the new facilities. This was a big day for all involved.

Courageous Advocacy This is a new, big initiative promoted by the Diocese as part of the Church of England schools' promotion of Christian Distinctiveness. It sets out to encourage the children to stand up and speak out for things they think are important, and often difficult, in the world and to back this up with supportive action.

The initiative is in its infancy and we are all learning the process together. There is a strong desire to get the children to

come up with the list of topics to concentrate on and for them to then drive the activities to support their passions. Various aspects of the 'green' agenda are popular and also the desire for all children to be treated fairly no matter their gender, colour, religion etc.

Courageous Advocacy will be an important focus in the coming year.

Drumming Workshop

Last September Jeff Rich of Status Quo fame came to St Mary's to run a drumming workshop for the whole school.

Jeff Rich talked about how he got into the music business,



Jeff Rich demonstrates drumming

shared some facts about his music and some interesting 'behind the scenes' information.

He then talked about the history of the drum, starting with African then European drums, old military drums and right up to the modern snare drums. The children were invited to play some of the drums and Jeff demonstrated some drumming techniques. The whole essence of the workshop was to inspire the children and show them that music is a fun thing to do.

Grow 10 This fundraising initiative was launched last September.



A playground stall

The ambitious campaign was driven by the children's School Council, with some help from the staff, with the aim of raising £6,000 to be used to help upgrade the school's computing infrastructure and equipment.

At its heart was asking each child to show their creative and

entrepreneurial skills by turning a £1 coin into £10. If successful this would deliver £2,100. There were many fundraising ideas including selling cakes, washing cars, dog walking, sponsored walks or bike rides, asking businesses for donations and selling unwanted toys.

When Grow 10 was brought to a close the total raised was a whopping £6,093.35 nearly three times the original target. What a fantastic effort by the children with no doubt a little support from parents too who should all be proud of their wonderful achievement. The upgrading of our IT infrastructure is now well underway.

School Performance Pleasingly, the pupils have continued to perform admirably in their Key Assessment areas compared to other primary schools in Essex, as well as nationally. Notably our Year 1 pupils achieved an 83% Phonics Check score (above Essex and National) in June 2024 and in their Year 6 SATs tests, our pupils achieved scores of 82% in Maths, 88% in Reading, 74% in Writing and 76% in SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) – all well above the national comparators.

In summary, the school continues to flourish. It is well led by the Headteacher and his team and well supported by St. Mary's church. I'd also like to thank the excellent team of governors who give their time so generously.

John Westnedge, Chair of Governors.

St. Mary's Guiding

St. Mary's Rainbows The Rainbow unit has been busy this last year doing lots of different activities. During last summer, we did a badge themed around the Olympics including parading our own Olympic torches around the brick maze on the common, and curated our own art gallery, with Olympic inspired artwork created by the Rainbows. In the autumn we then completed an alphabet challenge, where over the course of our term, we had to do an activity for every letter of the alphabet! We did **A**utumn artwork with leaves collected from the **c**hurch **y**ard, firework pictures, **R**emembrance **p**oppies and some fun **X**mas activities and many other things for this challenge. This current term we have been working on the 'Book Lover' badge including a fun visit to the library. We continue to have a full unit with a very long waiting list.

Saffy Lester – Rainbow leader
7thsaffrowaldenrainbows@gmail.com



Rainbows sell craft at the Fair

St. Mary's Brownies The Brownies are always busy, with 31 individual interest badges being completed during the year of 2024, with 'Collecting' being the most popular badge this year. We have also been doing a wide range of activities and challenges during meetings, as our Brownies work towards the different awards Bronze, Silver and Gold. The Brownies have designed and created prototypes of inventions, and researched Women inventors as part the Inventing badge. (Coffee makers, ice cream makers, dishwashers and windscreen wipers were all designed by women, amongst many other things!) The Brownies



Brownies stall at the Fair

have also done a Skills Builder Badge in the theme 'Express Myself', where in small groups, they wrote simple sketches based on a prop, which then performed them to the rest of the unit.

We had a relaxing sound bath meditation evening, courtesy of Laura Kempley. We have been out and about a couple of times visiting places like Bridge End Garden's Maze. Some of our Brownies also attended a sleepover, held locally, in February to celebrate Girlguiding's World Thinking Day, where they were

some of 20,000 members from Girlguiding Anglia doing the same in their local areas. They did crafts, games and sang some campfire songs while thinking about fellow members around the world.

We have a full unit with a waiting list.

Julie Lester – Brownie Leader

7thswst.marysbrownies@gmail.com



Guides sell toys at the fair

Guides We currently have an enthusiastic and lively group of Guides. The girls have continued to undertake a range of activities as part of the Guide programme. The summer term mostly centred around developing camping skills, although unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to take the girls away and put their skills into practice. Later in the year they completed the ABC challenge badge which involved doing an activity related to every letter of the alphabet. The girls suggested the activities and so we found ourselves making potions (a scientific experiment) and gingerbread houses, going on a winter walk and writing limericks amongst other things. The year culminated in taking part in the Girlguiding Anglia Pyjama Party in February to celebrate Thinking Day when we think about Girlguiding as a worldwide organisation. Locally the girls joined

with all the Brownies and Rangers in the District for a thoroughly enjoyable sleepover at Chesterford Community Centre.

We have been trying to recruit another adult helper for ages and we are delighted that Lucy Reece has now joined us and is starting her leadership training.

Margaret Jacobs

7thsaffrowaldenrainbows@gmail.com

Mothers' Union

We had a varied programme in 20024/25 including worship speakers & social. In March 24 Rev'd Dr Hilary Walker led a very thoughtful service of meditation in preparation for Holy week. In late May our Chaplain Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop held a very moving simple Communion service, in the round of the north chapel, to celebrate the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth.

In September Rev'd Chris Bishop also led our Corporate Communion service in the South Chapel when we welcomed Lay Reader Marissa Barltrock as our guest preacher who was excellent.

On 10th July, a highlight of the year was a guided tour of Ely Cathedral, enjoyed by members and husbands. We particularly remembered a former member Valery Bond, as it was one of her favourite places to visit.

Our members very much enjoyed Tracey Nicholls coming to speak to us about her life as a Lay Minister on April 11th. On 10 th October members held a 'Walk down Memory Lane', a collection of favourite hymns, songs and readings, with much participation from members.

On 14 th November Nicola and KT came to update us on the many changes which have taken place at the Stort Valley Schools Trust.

Our social meetings included an excellent Garden Party on August 8 th in a member's lovely garden, and a Christmas Party in the lounge at Custerson Court on 9 th January, with entertainment by our Chaplain and singing by the choir. This was postponed from December due to illness.

At the MU AGM in February 2025 there was no one willing to accept the role of branch leader. Membership is shrinking, many of the members are now in their eighties and no new members are joining. However, we would like to continue to meet together.

Judith Meaden is the MU diocesan representative and was invited to our meeting, to explain what diocesan membership means. It means we would all become individual members of Mothers Union with no formal committee and we would be able to organise meetings however we decided.

A motion was unanimously passed by all present to become diocesan members. Remaining members also agreed and currently we have 18 diocesan members. The branch is now officially closed but we will continue to meet as MU members in faith and friendship.



The Mothers Union

Brenda Sheath

Oasis - Men's Lunchtime Get-togethers

Oasis, our men's lunchtime get-together, first established in March 2014 and then known as **M5** (**St Mary's Men's Monthly Midweek Meet**) when we originally congregated at the Kings Arms, continued as usual this year at The Old English Gentleman in Gold Street, Saffron Walden, providing the

opportunity for male social contact and support, particularly for those who may live alone or may be experiencing difficult circumstances.

It remains as the sole survivor of the range of men's activities (some of which predated 2000) that mostly ceased as a result of the Covid lockdowns and which to date it has not been possible to revive.

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month (from 12noon) and the event is advertised by monthly notice in Grapevine with an email reminder to all those who have been known to attend previously. All are welcome - attendance is not restricted to men from St Mary's.

The gatherings which normally last about 2 hours are completely informal. Those who plan to attend are merely requested to let me know by 6pm on the day before to ensure a seat at table. The one house rule - everyone buys his own drink and lunch (which may be selected from the day to day menu).

Attendance this year has ranged from 6 to 11, with two newcomers welcomed and with a total of 92 for the 12 months, representing an increase of more than 16% on the 2023/4 year. We are in good health!

For more information please contact Bill Rose tel: 01799 516609 email: wjr2163@gmail.com

Bill Rose

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee monitors the income, expenditure and financial assets of St Mary's and met on three occasions in 2024. Membership of the Committee comprised Richard Garvey (Chairman), David Birchall (Treasurer), Steve Hasler, Patrick Li, Robin O'Neill, Simon Potter (Churchwarden) and Denis Tindley.

The routine business of the Committee is unchanged:

1. To receive reports from the Treasurer on the current financial position
2. Consider any changes to our investments
3. Consider requests for expenditure which need recommendation to the PCC
4. Review the Remuneration Committee's proposals re the salaries of our employees
5. Review the Treasurer's proposed Budget for the following year
6. Review the draft Annual Accounts
7. Additionally the Committee reviews the interim management accounts, variances from Budget, cash reserves and the reserves policy.

2024 continued to feel the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic with congregation numbers well down from pre-2020 levels and consequently smaller weekly collections. The 'CollecTin' remains a helpful donation mechanism for the congregation as well as for visitors to the church. We are fortunate to benefit from very generous donations and legacies as well as increases by some members of the congregation to their committed stewardship giving. The Christmas Fair made a very welcome contribution of just over £4,500 and the combination of fees from weddings and funerals and income from letting out church premises to third parties added over £17,000 more.

For the first time since 2019, the General Fund ended the year (2024) with a surplus of income over expenditure of £14,790. This was partly due to the success of the Stewardship Appeal in February as well as a reallocation of income from the Verger's Cottage and the saving in salaries after the departure of Matt Williamson, our Youth Worker.

The major Capital Project which was developed during 2024 was, of course, the renewal of the Lighting System. This has

been written about elsewhere with the Finance Committee and the PCC kept abreast of all material developments.

Contact: Treasurer, David Birchall -
davidjbirchall57@gmail.com

Richard Garvey – Finance Committee

Property Management Committee

In addition to the fabric of the church, Property Committee maintains the Parish Rooms, Verger's Cottage, Curate's House and keeps an eye on the churchyard (maintained by Saffron Walden Town Council). The committee met in May, September and January.

Work continues on the recommendations of the current quinquennial report. We are still awaiting quotations for work inside the church which includes repairs to ledger stones, glazing, stonework in the muniments room. While the report suggested that the North aisle roof could require replacing in the next five years, the architect has since revised that view. It will need replacing eventually but, being of copper, there are options to reinforce weak areas which will buy us time. Unfortunately, during routine maintenance of the guttering it became apparent that there are cracks in the South aisle roof. This is outside any warranty period but thankfully Lodge and Sons, who fitted the roof in 2000, have quoted to carry out remedial repairs at relatively modest cost. We are grateful for Tim Game and Mat Lester, who regularly inspected and cleaned the guttering in the past (in particular the hoppers that feed the downpipes). Working at height brings risks that are inadvisable for uninsured individuals and we have now employed a professional contractor to do this.

Two Faculty petitions were submitted in late 2024, for the Lighting Project and recasting of the 7th bell, respectively. Both have been approved and work for both of these will start this

year. The one for the bell had been held up by the requirements of an additional bat survey but, thankfully, there is no evidence of these in the belfry and so work may legally take place now, rather than waiting for the end of the maternity season in September.

A recurrent damp problem in parts of the Parish Rooms has been traced to a gully that runs parallel to the front, just beyond the wall. This was subjected to a video scan last year and a number of companies have been approached to quote for the relevant repairs. This work is scheduled for the summer. The two upper floor rooms are looking quite tired with the doors and frames in particular being rather scruffy. PCC agreed last year to an exploratory project to assess what work might be possible, working with the regular users (both church activities and external hirers) to assess their needs, with a view to eventually coming up with a plan based on available reserves and possible grant funding. There are also a number of problems with the windows and render in the Verger's Cottage. Being a listed building, this too needs careful attention to materials and methods. We are in receipt of quotes for this work and hope to commence the work soon.

I am grateful for the Property Committee members - Vivian Falk, Richard Freeman, Edward Gildea, Steve Hasler, Robin O'Neill and Denis Tindley - for their work behind the scenes and support.

Simon Potter (acting chairman)



Friends visited two Cathedrals

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

Following our celebrations last year of our 90th year we still retain a membership of 100 which we are really pleased with. Our noticeboard continues to attract interest as we report on our various activities. We had two Cathedrals trips during the year, the first to Rochester, said to be the 2nd largest Cathedral in the UK, we actually saw an etching of the original building which really resembled a barn but how it has changed over the years. Really interesting guides took us on the journey. After a lunch together we explored old Rochester, some people visiting the Castle directly opposite.

In June we had our first Bring & Share lunch together, after the 10.30am service, which everyone seemed to enjoy and we have decided this will be an annual event.

In August we visited St Albans Cathedral, another treat. Much of the current layout and proportions date back to the 11th century. We then had lunch in Ware followed by a leisurely river trip on the Lee. A really relaxing day.

In November we organised a talk by our very own Paula and Richard Winter entitled “Adventures in Iraq”. The talk certainly lived up to it's titled and we had a wonderful and informative evening.

We were donated an etching of the Church by David Aronsohn, a local artist, which we sold by blind auction raising £50 for The Friends.

We are sure that you will have noticed the 4 new mats as you enter the West door, these were provided by the Friends with the help of a generous donation from one of our members.

The Sewing Ladies continue their excellent work so that we have new kneelers to dedicate each year at the Patronal service in September, after which we have our AGM which this year was extremely well attended .

The Friends are in a position to be able to make a considerable contribution to the Lighting Project which hopefully will help.

At our AGM this year Gill Lovegrove resigned as a long term Council member and we thank her for all of her hard work. Joe Hordern will be leaving after Easter, also a long term member of the Council and we thank him too for all of his hard work and support for over 20 years. We wish him and Pauline well in their new home. Two new members joined the Council this year Vivian Falk our Warden and Rebekah Auty from the Choir so we continue to have members of the Council who are involved in a mixture of Church activities. We look forward to a busy year ahead.

*Contact: Pamela Mugliston
pjmteddybear@btinternet.com*

The Parish Archive

I am pleased to report that the small displays of Archived materials that I have been able to put on display outside the Vestry each month have been well received. If you do have church related documents etc that need a new home please let me know and we can discuss their future.

Since 2019 I have conducted some 65 'In the Pew' interviews of members of St Mary's congregation for inclusion in the Parish News, all of whom have become part of what we can call a 'Congregational Archive', pictures and all! So, thank you to all who have been part of this ongoing important exercise. Also, as part of the Archive I have gradually put together a small library which contains books relating to the history and spread of Christianity.

I know the stairs to the Muniments Room are steep, but if you should ever wish to see our small Archive, or have questions to ask please let me know. Thankyou to the PCC for supporting the presence of the Archive situated as it is in such an historically important room.

The Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop. Archivist.

ECO Team

The Eco Church team have had a quieter year this year. It consists of Edward Gildea and Shawn Martin, Alison Trew, John Forster, Jackie Damary Holman and Chris Knight, In October 2024 the Team reported to the PCC as follows:

We are still hovering on the edge of the Silver Award. Tremendous efforts are being made with regard to low energy lighting and the initiation of plans to renovate the Church Rooms, but we have slipped backwards against some of the other Eco Church criteria.

Buildings - Still Bronze 243/490 Chris Knight's measurement of our church's carbon footprint had contributed to the process of planning our 'pathway to zero', as required by the diocese, and

we are awaiting the report from a diocesan advisor about how we might take things forward. The progress being made on the replacement of our lighting system and the funding that has been so generously donated are most encouraging. We also look forward to the possibility of improving the insulation and energy efficiency of the Parish Rooms in the medium term.

Worship - Slipped from Gold to Silver 78/110 From the individual perspectives of members of the group, environmental issues seemed to have received less focus and attention over the past year, whether in sermons, intercessions or music. Environmental concerns continue to feature in our services and prayers but anecdotally it was felt that this happened less frequently. We need a means of logging and recording this dimension of Eco church if we are to regain the Gold standard.

Land - Still Silver 95/155 Biodiversity continues to flourish in the churchyard. Edward liaises with the Town Council regularly to try to ensure that things remain tidy where they are not set aside for nature.

Community and Global Engagement - Slipped from Silver to Bronze 83/220 Our strength in this area is almost entirely due to Alison Trew and Hazel Colebrooke's Fairtrade Stall. They have stalwartly continued to set up and manage our monthly Fairtrade stall despite the dissolution of the Traidcraft organisation. It serves as a reminder to the congregation of our connection with brothers and sisters in far more vulnerable parts of the world.

We still need to improve our performance under Q3: Hosting local environmental talks; Q13: Praying for Overseas Environmental Projects; Q 15: Participation in campaigns on national environmental issues.

Lifestyle - Still Silver 99/ 160 We maintained our position here very largely due to the Carbon Footprint survey designed

and carried out by Alison. The responses showed how people were taking the issue seriously and doing what they could. Points were also scored as a result of the environmental articles in the Parish News but were lost under Q9 regarding the promotion of ethically sourced goods. It was felt that downgrading the proposal to adopt an ethical procurement policy in 2022 to 'guidelines' falls short of the standard required. Our subscription to 'Ethical Consumer' to enable 40 people to have on-line access to their reports was taken up by very few people and was discontinued as did not prove to be a cost-effective way of encouraging ethical purchasing lifestyles.

Looking Ahead Edward is finding it increasingly difficult to look to the future with any hope for humanity. Effective leadership needs to be founded in optimism and positivity, so he plans to step down from the role of Eco Church team leader from July 2025. He will have completed 6 years in the role.

*This team is currently without a leader, contact via PCC secretary
Stmaryssaffronwaldenpcc@gmail.com*

Links with the Worldwide Church:



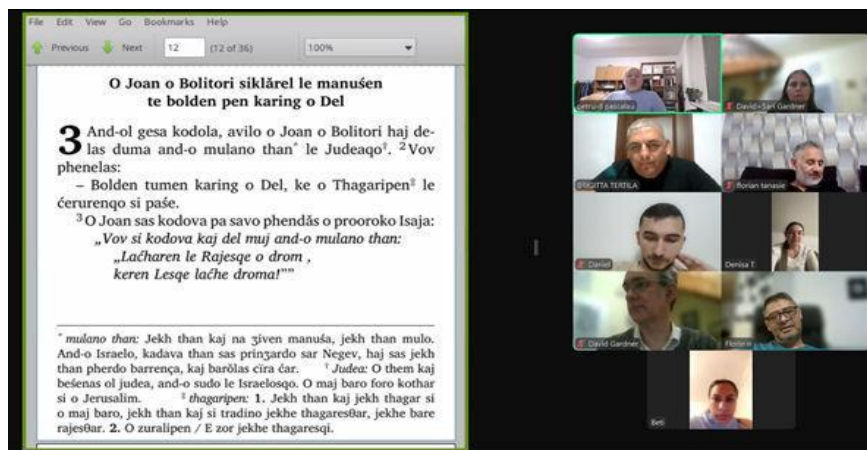
Translated books dedicated in Ghimbav

Dr David & Sári Gardner's work with Wycliffe Bible

Translators in Romania 2024 David & Sári have now been in Romania for over 22 years and continue to be committed to their work on Bible translation for the Roma and other translations world-wide. This international commitment results in a difficult work schedule where the local translators need help outside the normal working day and overseas workers are not in the same time-zone.

The Romanian government's desire to have education available for speakers of the diverse Roma dialects has resulted in an emphasis on a "Standard Romani" language which is being taught in schools. A team of translators has been formed by local pastors and leaders (helped by Wycliffe Romania), with David and Sári as external trainers and exegesis advisors. The local translators' salaries and various other project costs are funded on a 3 year cycle by Wycliffe USA and Wycliffe UK & Ireland. This work has been very successful and resulted in the publication of Mark, John, Acts and the beginning of Genesis in print, online, sound recordings and as videos. Work is well under way on Matthew and Luke. The publications have already resulted in some pastors adopting Romani in their churches whereas previously they had used Romanian for their dominantly Roma congregations. The translation work was recently reviewed and funding for the translators approved for the next three years. (David and Sári's income is not connected to this project at all, nor do they have a regular salary. Instead Wycliffe passes on to them gifts that are received in their name, after a small charge to help fund the office.)

In addition to formally assisting and training this Standard Romani team, Sári has just finished an MA and qualified as a Translation Consultant. The next step in her consultancy career will require her to learn yet another language (her Hungarian, Romanian, several Romani variants and German are not much help in minority languages that need most consultant help at the moment).



Wycliffe Bible Translators meet online

In addition to assisting and training the translation team, David continues his programming and support for the PTXprint computerised publishing program. This has proved to dramatically reduce the time taken (previously weeks or months) to convert translations to a printable form. This is becoming internationally important and currently in use for 400-500 translation projects around the world. The program's flexibility allows local teams to quickly try out different fonts and layouts which have significant impact on readability.

Erik, their youngest, continues to do well at school and will be confirmed in April after completing studies one evening per week for the last two years. His other extra-curricular activities include membership of the local fencing club.

Emma, their youngest daughter, achieved outstanding results at school, gaining her a scholarship and entry to Cluj University for a biology degree. She is continuing to do well and is aiming to achieve a similar bursary for her second year. Her end of semester results were good, but she was not satisfied with an 8.5/10 result on one subject, so retook it too achieve a 9.0.

Following her marriage, Anikó moved to Slovakia where she is working as a customer advisor as well as maintaining the home and a very active kitten.

Mark has continued his work as a programmer and plans to complete his computing / mathematics degree this year.

David and Sári are particularly grateful for the financial support from St Mary's, as this represented about 15% of their annual income. Last year's finances were difficult, but were somewhat relieved when an expensive and essential 25m fence replacement came in under budget. They do everything where legally possible on a DIY basis to keep costs down. Past examples of this include roof repairs and electrical work.

The entire family (David, Sári, Mark, Anikó & Áron, Emma and Erik) are planning to be in Saffron Walden in July and August. David and Sári will be attending a Wycliffe conference as well as visiting a number of supporting churches around the country.

Gerald Gardner

Some Team Members







PCC members, March 2025

Rev'd Jeremy Trew, (Chair) Rev'd Ella Harris, Rev'd Marisa Baltrock, Rev'd Tracey Nicholls, Rev'd Hilary Walker, Canon Judith Hasler, Rev'd Linda Sebbage, Simon Potter (Churchwarden) Vivian Falk (Churchwarden) David Birchall (Treasurer) Anna Martin (Secretary and Deanery Synod Representative) Richard Freeman (Deanery Synod Representative) Gill Caswell (Deanery Synod Representative) Noel Starr, Martin Hugall, Edward Gildea, Steve Hasler, Robin O'Neill, Lisa Brook, Bron Ferland, Patrick Li, Hannah Razzell, Oliver King (co-opted Director of Music. contact: Anna Martin email: StMarysPCC@gmail.com

Giving

We are very grateful to those who continue to support our church's running costs with their standing orders. Any contributions will be most appreciated. Thank you.

If you make an online bank transfer then please direct your gift to: Saffron Walden Parochial Church Council,
Sort code: 20-74-05
A/c No: 70787116