

Rector's Report 11th May 2025

Strictly speaking this report is meant to cover the calendar year of 2024. With all the changes that have been going on, however, I cannot but stray into the early part of 2025 for some of my reflection.

I commented last year on how I had rapidly become the longest serving incumbent in the Deanery. Following an extended period of recruitment, both last year and this, there is now a distinct threat that both the Deanery and our Team will be fully staffed, clergy wise, by the end of this Summer. This will be a big relief for me. So, if you see me wandering around the Parish with a slightly bemused look, it's that. In 2024 we welcomed Rev'd Lynda Sebbage to the Saffron Walden and Villages Team, serving primarily in Debden and Wimbish. In December Rev'd Ella Harris was signed off from her Curacy, meaning she could now apply for an incumbent's post. Thankfully, she has chosen to stay with the Team and will be taking on the leadership of the Cam Villages. More recently we have been able to appoint Rev'd Romey Poston to the long-vacant post based in Ashdon and Hadstock. My thanks to all who have "held the fort" across the Team, giving generously of time and talents, especially our retired Clergy,

My hope is that, with the appointments mentioned above the Team can work more as a whole, rather than separate parts. This is why, in 2024, the Team Council looked at legislation that allows us to reconstitute the Team and its governance. I hope that we can continue the trend of working more closely together, drawing from the best that each worshipping community has to offer, and giving good support to all in the variety of situations we find ourselves in.

In 2024 we also said goodbye to Matt, our Children and Youth lead, as he headed to a Diocesan post. The group established to find his replacement have decided to split the role into two part-time posts; one focusing on children and families in Saffron Walden Parish; and one on youth across the Team. We are currently making good progress on recruitment for the children's role. Youth workers are in short supply nationally, so please pray as we seek to make this appointment. My thanks to all who have continued to support work with children and youth in our church families and community.

Last year the Deanery gained funding to support a project building familiarity with Bible stories amongst children at local Primary Schools. Momentum is growing and we now have the genesis of teams for Debden, Great Chesterford, and now, Saffron Walden. Please pray for Debs, who co-ordinates this for the Deanery, and for our local volunteers as we seek to get this project live locally.

Every Wednesday there is a simple and short service of Morning Prayer in the North Chapel at St Mary's. After this the Team clergy, office staff, and others gather to reflect on work done and imminent and to co-ordinate diaries. This "staff-room" time is a very helpful opportunity to strengthen what we do through sharing skills and insights; something for

which I am most grateful. So, my thanks to Claire and Anthea for all their work in the office (clergy are not always the best managers, and their patience is only just short of miraculous), and also to Judith, who brings so much insight and experience into our combined efforts. We try to plan to use time well, but there is never enough of it. Last Autumn we took an away-day to plan strategically for 2025, and we hope to do the same again this year; both to plan and to get to know new Team members better.

Week-in, week-out, this Parish is very busy, and not just on Sundays. Our Parish Rooms provide a venue for much important community activity. My thanks to John Westnedge for taking a lead on considering options for upgrading the Parish Rooms. My thanks also to all who prepare, welcome, read, pray, play and sing at our services. All of this helps provide a good and special environment in which to meet God. My thanks also to Nathan, who oversees Safeguarding, for his work to help ours to be a safe and open space for all. However, it is all our responsibility to ensure that Church life is inclusive, enriching and safe. Your contribution to this is also important.

In 2024 we saw a very positive response to the stewardship appeal, and very generous giving to pay for the lighting project. My thanks again to David and the Finance Committee for all they do guiding stewardship. My thanks also to Steve, and his team, ensuring that we will soon have a lighting system that both works and should provide for us for decades to come. As this project comes to fruition, I would like to turn attention again to a nave reordering at the East end, with provision of a dais and space for our choir to be heard at their best.

Looking ahead to 2026, I am marking a big birthday which will mean looking ahead to my remaining years of licensed ministry. To help me in this I have been allocated one of a limited number of sabbaticals, which I will take from shortly after this meeting in 2026 for three months. Clergy are usually entitled to take sabbaticals every ten years. This will be my second in twenty-nine years of ministry, the other being in 2012. The purpose is rest, reflection and study. I hope to explore the theme of pilgrimage, both in the context of physical pilgrimages to specific holy sites, and the idea of pilgrimage within our daily lives and the working out of our faith. I will say a bit more about this at next year's meeting.

As ever, my thanks to all who are the Churches of St Mary's, St James, and St John's. It is a privilege to be your priest.

Thank you

Jeremy

Rev'd Jeremy Trew