

Parish of Saffron Walden Annual Review 2026



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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.

Secretary's PCC report and introduction

This year at St Mary's seems to have passed quickly and has gone well. At the May 2025 Annual meetings, Vivian Falk and Simon Potter were re-elected as Churchwardens. Patrick Li, Bill Rose, Jan Siewertsen and Pam Russell were elected again as their assistants, together with Gill Caswell. We thank them for their dedicated work. Hayden Rocks was elected Electoral Roll officer.

Noel Starr, Janet Siewertsen, Gill Gibson and Martin Hugall were re-elected onto the PCC as was Rufus Barnes, after having had a year off. Edward Gildea stepped down and was thanked for the work he had done, particularly relating to the eco-group. Deanery Synod elections are triennial, so the pre-existing representatives continued in post.

It was good to have some new faces in roles: We were glad that Julie was appointed as our Children and Youth leader and that Hayden Rocks became our youth intern. Assistant Organist Jeremy Allen requested a reduction in his hours and the Standing Committee agreed in November that Philip Sunderland should support this role. Helen Counsell took over from Kate Beare as the leader of our youngest singing group Joyful Noise.

We have had six meetings of the PCC this year, which were all convened lawfully in May, June, September, November, January and March. During the year we discuss and take decisions on many issues, including the normal reviews of our many regular and joyful worship services, as well as setting the church budget and monitoring finances and the buildings. The "Ring" project, and the Lighting Project, which has just been completed on March 8th, have been two of our major concerns, and we have discussed the siting of a statue as part of the 1647 Project.

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. As usual, 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, Swards End

The past 12 months have flown by and whilst we had another good year at St James. It was mostly more of the same. Our numbers have held up well and our various events have been well supported. Talking of support, Lynne and I would like to formally say how much we appreciate all the help we get from the committee and indeed the wider congregation, Our thanks also go to Chris Bishop for being our friend and shepherd. His work amongst us is invaluable.

The fabric of St James is holding out quite well, but we are aware of future needs regarding the roof with some dampness and minor structural work in the garden. Some of this is more maintenance, but the roof will eventually require remedial work on one side – the other having been done a decade or so ago. Fortunately, we are financially robust and have sufficient funds available when the time comes.

Tessa Hawkes applied her extraordinary skills to make us a beautiful backcloth to the altar – again thanks to her.

On the giving side we have recently agreed to increase the amount of our donations as a reflection of our healthy reserves.

As we say above, it was largely a routine year, but we would highlight some services and events which stood out more than others. In no particular order these include:-

1) We welcomed the St Mary's Junior Choir and their grown-up master Oli King, who provided great music and song. A lovely service which we hope can be repeated more often.

2) Our Harvest Supper was well supported with Chris Bishop running a quiz and providing the entertainment. Great food and great atmosphere.

3) The carol service and the Christmas Day service were both well attended, as was the carol singing outside the village hall. Interestingly, many of those who attended the latter event and subsequent mulled wine and mince pies were from the village rather than the congregation. This was good to see.

4) On a very sad note, John Reid passed away aged 99 and his funeral in late November was both nostalgic and moving. In listening to the eulogies, we learned that he was quite remarkable in all he did and achieved. It reminded many of us how “ordinary” folk can do extraordinary things. RIP John.

5) Our Remembrance Service was also well attended and supported by soldiers from Carver Barracks. Again, a moving ceremony.

6) We did have excitement with regard to our septic tank which reached capacity on Christmas Eve. The wheels of commerce were oiled with a couple of bottles of claret which saw John Jossaume and deputy riding their tractor through the rain and mist to save the day. This essential service is now diarised for early December each year.

7) The Wardens were visited by Graham Cook in his capacity as Archdeacon’s representative. We scored around 8 out of 10 and apologised for those infractions left undone. Fortunately, we had not done anything which we ought not to have done. Anyway, we are still in post and noted his criticisms.

8) We both attended the Archdeacons service for the Parish Wardens in St Mary’s although disappointingly as only Deputy Wardens we were unable to participate. Nevertheless, it was an interesting and moving service.

9) We had a lovely wedding of 2 local young people at which St James was looking its very best for the occasion. The service was conducted by Rev’d Jeremy Trew.

10) To celebrate the 30th anniversary of us being named St James (as originally suggested by Rev’d Joy Russell-Smith) a moving Patronal service was held on a glorious July day. This was combined with Hymns and Pimms, which to say the least went down very well. This format could be adopted in the future if we can find an excuse to do so.

11) The Youth Club has always been an important outreach project for St James, and we were concerned when the leader moved on. Fortunately, our prayers – and those we suspect of many – have been answered in the form of Julie Lester being appointed to the role. During the “interregnum” several St James’ people stepped into the breach and kept the club running. We are indebted to them.

The above narrative and subsequent points are a reflection of a busy year even if it was mostly routine. We hope the coming year will of a similar nature. Time will tell.

*Mike Dean and Lynne Ketteridge - Deputy Wardens
Contact St James via St Marys Parish Office*

St John’s Church, Little Walden

It has been a busy year at St John’s, we have seen a steadying of our congregational numbers and a marked increase in the number of people, particularly young families, attending our festival services.

The Quinquennial report continues to be a focus for our maintenance programme, and we successfully raised funds to have the blown brickwork replaced. We have also had the bell rope mended, so that the village can once again hear the ringing of the bell when we have a service.

Our outdoor services continue to be very popular, especially the bubble blowing during the service of Pentecost. This year we are hoping to expand these services and return to a woodland setting, so that we can invite more people to attend. The “Forest Church” services are a small part of the continued commitment of the congregation to achieve the Bronze Eco-church Award. To this end we are only using locally sourced, seasonally available flowers and we are oasis free in our flower arrangements.

At a time when some people are questioning the relevance of church and particularly the Church of England in our society, we at St John’s have strived to be a reflection of God’s presence in the village. Our congregation are involved in all aspects of village

life and have taken part in many village activities. The church has been used as a venue for craft fairs, VE Day celebrations and a florist workshop. We have also led the Remembrance Day service, raised money for charity by making Hot Cross Buns and held a very successful Harvest Brunch, followed by an auction of homemade goods, the monies raised went to our chosen charities.

Perhaps the highlight of our year was the Carols by Candlelight service, there was standing room only and it was a delight to see so many children there. The service was chaotic as the kings and shepherds jostled for the best positions, nearest the baby Jesus, but Mary and Joseph kept their cool, and order was restored (well, sort of). We offer our grateful thanks to Tracey Nicholls and Micheal Lovegrove for their continued love and guidance as they lead us in worship. We can be a chaotic congregation, particularly when “peace breaks out” but they keep us in order, and we are always challenged and uplifted in equal measure by their leadership.

As we look forward to next year, we know that it will be a time of change and adjustment as we say goodbye to Kate and Dave Beare. The Beares have been an integral part of the church and village for 30 years and they shall be greatly missed. We wish them well for the future and pray that they find a church community that loves and values them even more than we do. Thank you, Kate, Dave and all the family, for the service you have given to St John’s.

Helen and David Nash (Deputy Wardens)

Service Planning Committee (SPC)

SPC met three times in 2025 to review the programme of services at St Mary’s – reflecting on those that have occurred since the previous meeting and planning forward for the coming months. As well as reviewing the practicalities and logistics, we particularly focus on the liturgy of festival and other special

services to ensure that our services are rich, varied and relevant to all who may attend so that they enhance our worship.

SPC is chaired by the Rector; other members are Gill Caswell, Vivian Falk, Bron Ferland, Judith Hasler, Simon Potter, Oli King, Pamela Mugliston and Hilary Walker. Denis Tindley stood down at the end of 2025 after providing many years of wise counsel.

The impact of the lighting project starting in September was on the agenda at every meeting as a lot of forward planning was required. Whilst Sunday services should not be affected, it was agreed that our normal pattern of weekday services would be continued where possible with the services relocating to the Parish Rooms. Work was paused for the Advent and Christmas season to allow festival services to take place. The chancel would be out of use for January 2026 which would impact on the choir and the use of the main altar. By September we were able to look forward to the completion of the project in early March 2026 and started planning for a service of thanksgiving.

In February, we reflected on well attended Advent and Christmas services, with attendance returning to pre-Covid levels. It was agreed that bag collections would be discontinued, being replaced by a collection plate at the door. This helped the welcomers operate with smaller teams.

In April, we reviewed the Holy Week services. The choir's devotional offering had moved to Palm Sunday which not only spread the load for the choir but enabled the period from the Good Friday hour at the cross until the dawn service on Easter Day to be observed as a liturgical pause. This had worked well and the pattern will be continued. Attendance at the early Holy Week services and reflections was low but it was felt to be important to continue our traditional pattern. Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day services were all very well attended.

In September, we agreed to reintroduce the 'common cup' at the 10.30am service on the first Sunday of each month. This requires more servers and the use of two altars. The response to this would be reviewed in the new year. Living Stones and H2H

services have been paused for the time being. Choral Evensong and Taizé services continue on a monthly basis.

Judith Hasler

Baptism Team

In 2025 there were 14 baptisms at St Mary's; 4 adults and 10 infants/children. Although the 12.15 stand alone baptism service has long proved to be more popular than a baptism within the 10.30 service, this is the first year that we have had no 10.30 baptisms. The first baptism of the year was in April, then there were 6 baptisms during June and July and August. The autumn saw a further 3 baptisms and then in December a family of four, Mum, Dad and two children, were all baptised at the same service.

I am as ever grateful to the rest of the team, Pamela, Kathryn and Sandra, for meeting families who are new to St Mary's when they attend Family Services, for helping at baptisms and assistance in updating the baptism board, which stands adjacent to the font and displays the names of all those baptised over the past year. I also enjoy their company at what seems to have become our annual social evening!

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.

We have a great team with a few new members and they all help at regular services and some at special services during the year, all with a friendly smile for meeting and greeting. The new lighting will of course be of great help for the Christmas special services and will cut down the number of Welcomers required at some of these services.

Vivian is still looking for a co-ordinator for the Special Services so if you feel that might be of interest to you then please get in touch.

We look forward to another year of helping in any way we can.

Contact: Pamela Mugliston - Sunday morning Welcome Co-ordinator. pjmteddybear@btinternet.com or Vivian Falk, Church Warden and Special Services Co-ordinator (until that post is filled) vivian@brackendalehouse.co.uk

Music

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.” —Psalm 66:1–2.

It has been another screamingly (no pun intended) busy year and I am pleased to report that music continues live on and thrive as an important thread in our worship at St Mary’s. There have been a number of comings and goings which we’ll elaborate more on below.

The adult choir remains in fine fettle and has continued to form the backbone of our music making at St Mary’s. One very special and notable undertaking was the commissioning and subsequent performance of ‘The Spark Motets’ composed by Brian Moles with text written by Paula Griffiths. This work was commissioned by the SMMA in memory of Chris Ferland, a former chorister of the choir. This has been an exciting and ambitious project which has run at varying levels for almost 10 months.

The culmination was the complete first performance at the ‘Service of Light’ in March. It is hoped that the SMMA will continue to commission new works by both up and coming and established composers.

In October, the choir sang choral evensong at Bury St Edmunds Cathedral – this proved to be a lovely day, and it was a joy to sing in such beautiful and historic surroundings that are closely connected with our own church. My thanks go to Caroline Goulder and Peter De Vile for organising this.

Our little music department has undergone something of a restructure this year. After many years of tremendous service, Jeremy Allen made the difficult decision to cut down his weekly commitments. Philip Sunderland (member of our congregation and choir parent) was appointed to share the post of Assistant Organist. Looking forward, we are thrilled to be working with two such wonderful and talented musicians. James, our Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar has worked tremendously hard this year, and we have been thrilled with the progress which he has made during his short time so far in post. James is a gifted and versatile musician who is equally at home on the organ as he is conducting a choir. He has also recently been awarded a Distinction in his Grade 8 piano which is a great achievement. We are delighted that he has accepted our offer of staying on as organ scholar for a second year.

We are very sad to be losing Kate Beare from Easter. Kate has been a stalwart member of the choir who has supported our music making in a multitude of different ways; she founded Joyful Noise and ran it successfully for many years, she facilitated scholar concerts and played in or led many different events and services, both at St John's Little Walden and at St Mary's. Kate's two daughters (Ellie and Susie) were committed members of the Junior Choir, and Scholars before serving in the Adult Choir. It is difficult to put into words our appreciation of Kate and her family and wish them Godspeed with their upcoming move to their beloved Devon.

My heartfelt thanks go to all that support the choir – especially to Jim and Siong Siong Butler and Margaret Jacobs (our wonderful Choir Librarians), to Bron Ferland (admin), and Gill Gibson (robes).

Joyful Noise has continued to work hard, and as alluded to above, had a change of leadership. Helen Counsell kindly took over at the start of the Spring term and is so far making excellent headway with leading our important foundation level choir.

Helen writes: "We have been focusing on recruitment in the first half of this term. We have gained 3 new members so far. We are now looking forward to two performances this half term

(Mothering Sunday Family Service and end of term informal performance to family and friends).” Our thanks go to Kate Beare, Ruby Parsons, Helen Counsell and Jenny Dobson for their contributions to our music.

The Junior Choir continue to thrive, and we have recently overhauled our Friday evenings to incorporate a ribbon training slot as part of their regular Friday night routine. The Junior Choir currently number 15, work well together and are a joy to run. There are 8 choral scholars at this time, and they are also doing well. We were thrilled to learn that Poppy has recently successfully auditioned for the National Youth Choir (NYC). Worth also bearing in mind that another scholar, Harry, also remains a current member of the NYC. Izzie, who is a member of J-Steps jazz ensemble, has been writing music with her band colleagues and they will be recording their composition at Abbey Road Studios, no less. There is also exciting news from our former scholars: George Cass is now studying for an MA in Musical Theatre at the Royal Academy of Music, Elliot Randall will take up a new post as organ scholar at Tewkesbury Abbey, and Ziyi Wang has been awarded a Distinction in her Grade 8 organ, with an impressive result of 146 out of a possible 150 marks.

Congratulations go to them all! My thanks go to Alison and Bron for their help with the Juniors, and to Lewis and Noel for their continued mentoring of the choral scholars.

The church instruments continue to be crucial assets to our music making and we were fortunate to be gifted a wonderful Bechstein upright piano by Michael Dean and Charlotte Wilson which is located in the North Chapel and which replaces an old piano which was well beyond its working life span. We are extremely grateful for this very generous donation to our church resources. The main organ remains the subject of some concern, though Lisa Brook (Organ Committee Chair) will write about this in more detail elsewhere in this set of reports.

Peter De Vile has maintained the organ for several decades, retired this year and we are eternally grateful to him for everything that he has done for us. Thankfully, he will remain in

the choir as a committed chorister and deal with any urgent organ related issues. Tristan Moore from Goetze and Gwynn Ltd took on routine maintenance of the organ from March 2026.

As usual, there have been some especially notable events in our busy calendar. In September, we enjoyed a stunning concert given by our choral scholars.

Traditionally, the scholars choose the repertoire they will perform together; this year they chose music firmly rooted in the choral tradition and sang some Byrd and Lotti, amongst other works. There were also some superb solo performances from a number of our committed youngsters.

We held our increasingly popular SMMA lunchtime concert series and heard some fabulous performances from a wide range of artists. It's most encouraging and rewarding to see that aside from the music itself, these concerts seem to bring a great joy to those in our community who perhaps feel isolated; the prospect of some company, the opportunity to chat over some refreshments, and a warm welcome brings them back week after week. Our autumn and spring concerts have been much missed – though we look forward to resuming concerts again on Wednesday 27 May.

Thanks to Peter De Vile, we were fortunate enough to welcome the incredible Wayne Marshall to give a bold and impressive celebrity organ recital – this event was a great success! Gonville and Caius Choir, having so enjoyed performing at St Mary's last year, chose us as the venue for their live BBC broadcast of Choral Evensong on Radio 3 and it was a joy to see a packed church for this historic event.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all those who contribute in so many ways towards supporting the music at St Mary's. Lastly our thanks go especially to Jeremy, Simon and Vivian for leading our church so wisely on a day-to-day basis.

Oliver King, Director of Music

Hannah Razzell, St Mary's Music Association Chairman

Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers

2025 was an important year in the history of the Bells and Change ringers of St Mary's Church.

In May 2024 the seventh bell, cast by John Briant in 1797, was cracked in an accident and became unusable, but by June 2025, work to remove and recast the bell was underway and was funded. The bell's recasting and rehung presented an opportunity to increase our engagement with the community, celebrate our heritage, and establish St Mary's, Saffron Walden, as a training centre for ringers in the district.

The church was very fortunate that our insurance covered the cost of recasting our 7th bell which was installed during the summer, restoring our nationally significant ring of 12 bells. Moneys were received by January 2025, but a bat inspection had to be carried out. The bat inspection confirmed that the work could go ahead in July. A faculty to replace the bell was obtained in March and the order was placed with the last remaining bell foundry in UK, John Taylor's.

The Town Council granted permission for the Change Ringers to put the town logo on the bell. The bell was also engraved with the names of two change ringers who have served continuously for over sixty years; John Mumford (from 1961) and Roger Collins (from 1962).

A group from Saffron Walden travelled to see the bell being case in the bell foundry, which was a fascinating and joyful experience that none of those present will ever forget. The bell was on display in the church over the weekend of 12th /13th July, when the church was occupied overnight on the Friday and Saturday by the 1st and 5th Saffron Walden Scout Troops. Insurance for their sleepover, Risk Assessment, safeguarding considerations etc. were managed by the Scouts. The ringers provided breakfast to the scouts each morning in the Parish Rooms. John Mumford and a professional photographer took pictures of the promotional events and there were press releases. The bell was first rung Friday 18th July at 7.30pm.

As the 7th bell was re-installed, the Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers launched the Bells 2025 Project. The aims of this were:

- To explain our heritage of bells and bellringing at St. Mary's
- To attract new ringers of all ages
- To improve the ringing experience

The total project costs were estimated at £38,000.

Chris McCarthy spoke and outlined the context of the project to the PCC in June, and they agreed that a faculty should be applied for the work to be done on the bells. Each bell to be lifted from its pit, the bearings to be systematically stripped down, thoroughly cleaned, checked for wear and refitted using new bearing seals and fresh lubricant. The bellringers had the funds to pay for the work, which will cost £5,561 plus VAT.

The Bell Project, which has continued after the replacement of the bell, aims to: engage the bell ringers with the church & congregation, show what ringing is and how it is part of church life; hold open events to encourage the public to visit the tower and try their hand at bell ringing; offer tower visits to groups, especially schools and youth organisations; hold publicly accessible displays; produce interpretation boards explaining the heritage skill of bell ringing and the part played by Saffron Walden in its development; create a display of our photograph archive, telling the stories of famous local ringers; install a screen linked by webcam to show the bells in location and in action; encourage new learners; upgrade the ringing chamber to create a more comfortable environment (lighting, heating, carpet), while keeping its traditional feel; install specialist equipment to facilitate training (simulator, dumbbells) and finally make it easy and attractive for new people to find out how to join us and learn the art and science of ringing.

In support of these objectives, we have identified a list of works with budget costings. Our financial target is £32K

The team were also interested in buying a Sanctus Bell (see below) since the Ellacombe chimes had been deemed

dangerous and taken out of service, but the PCC decided that a Sanctus bell was not essential at this time.

The ringers comprise around 18 active members. The funds raised from this membership is very significant and we are looking to the wider church community to support this initiative too.

Compiled from several of the Society's reports to the PCC

Home Groups

Greenways Homegroup

We continue to meet roughly fortnightly on a Wednesday evening for Bible Study or to read a book together. This year our programme has been: -

- The First Letter of John
- 'Looking Through the Cross' by Graham Tomlin
- Selected passages from John's gospel in conjunction with Paula Griffith's book on John
- 'Listening to the Music of the Soul' by Guli Francis-Dehqani

In addition we enjoyed a lovely summer's evening meal together, and also were entertained by selecting and listening to each others' Desert Island Discs.

Two new members joined us this year. Special thanks to our host, Bill, for tea, coffee and chocolate biscuits!!

Andy Colebrooke - andy.colebrooke@gmail.com

Maypole Close home group.

We continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month during term time at 2.00pm. We use a variety of study material ranging from Women in the Bible, Birds of the Bible to our current book written by Steven Croft 'Exploring God's Mercy.

Our numbers vary between 6 and 12. We start with refreshments, then follow lively debate about the various topics in the study material finishing with prayer. The leading of each session is shared around the members. *Gill Caswell*

Brackendale home group

This group started in October with numbers varying between 6 and 12. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month starting at 1.45. There is tea, coffee and cake before we start. The group initially used one of the Pilgrim books on the creed and are now looking at *The Road Chosen* by Janet Killeen. The poems and stories bring out a lot of discussion around the topics, enabling us to look at familiar stories such as the woman at the well in a fresh light.

Ruby Parsons

Church Flowers

“Flowers have been arranged only when possible, during the year with the usual exception of Advent and Lent. This has been due to the lack of flower arrangers on the rota. We are trying to remedy the situation - some members of the team are holding 4 sessions of flower arranging in the church in May to encourage more folk to join the team.”

Pam Russell and Jane Knight
pamrussell02@talktalk.net

Sewing Circle

We all carry on but getting older and slower. Maybe because we must nearly be at the end of the task. Only the North Isle to be done and we have become such a united group sharing our children's news then children's weddings then grandchildren and just embarking on Great Grandchildren. Petronella and I are standing back from the Handicraft stall at The Christmas Fair after 50 years. Time to make room for the younger generation. !

If you have any requests, please contact Tessa Hawkes

Tessa Hawkes 01799 523888

Prayer Team

The Prayer Team is a small group of 6 who meet regularly to pray together and to encourage others in the congregation in their own prayer lives.

In order to do this we create Prayer Spaces in the church; each new space has a different theme and is put together by different members of the team. We also provide a Prayer of the Month for the Parish News magazine, a Prayer Diary leaflet (available in church and on the website) and put on a Quiet Morning each year. Our Quiet Morning for 2026 was an exploration of different ways to draw closer to God, given by Andy Colebrooke; this Quiet Morning is a good way of learning to spend time with God (ie praying!) along with others in a non-threatening atmosphere - watch out for news of another such morning in the coming year! We have plans for a new Prayer venture to encourage children and young people in the future - watch this space!

And a big thank you to the others in the Team - Hilary, who hosts us, Tricia, Chris, Gill and Vivian, who all bring varied and invaluable gifts to our group.

Hazel Colebrooke - Prayer Team Leader
hazel.colebrooke@gmail.com

Julian Group

We now meet at 9.30 a.m. on the second Tuesday of the month, instead of 7 p.m. (to save walking home in the dark.). It is still the same very simple agenda: a reading from Mother Julian's 'Enfolded in Love,' then half an hour's silence followed by discussion..... if we feel like it, and closing about 10.30

Tessa Hawkes - 01799 523888

Book Group

St Mary's Book Group has continued to meet monthly to discuss a book chosen by a member. These have covered a range of books, from 101 Dalmations to the memoir Patriot written in prison by Alexei Navalny before he was poisoned there. We also read the autobiography of the MP Wes Streeting, One Boy 2 Bills and a Fry Up, and a biography of Clementine Churchill. As a classic, we read and discussed The Three Musketeers, and a Japanese novel about a cat by Makoto Shinkai. Some members listen to the book beforehand, some read paper copies, and some who have not finished the book enjoy the discussion and the log fire.

Robin O'Neill

Communications Committee

There are 8 of us on this committee (Clifford Want, Anthea Slater, John Pickthorn, Lewis Colley, Patrick Li, Simon Potter, Vivian Falk and Martin Hugall). We usually meet 4 times a year and minutes of our meetings are tabled at PCC meetings and summaries are included in the Parish News. We are fortunate to have Vivian Falk join our group this year and value the various outreach initiatives she has instigated.

A major achievement recently has been finalising the installation of our new external signs for the church which we hope will be in place by the time this is published despite some manufacturing problems. The former wooden ones, now 14 years old, have served us well but have taken their toll and the new ones will be much more weather resistant. This has given us the opportunity to consider carefully what information should go on these signs, and that it should be clearly visible, attractive, welcoming and contemporary. They will also be easier to update

in the future. A lot of planning has been involved which also involved approval by the PCC and the Diocese. We are extremely grateful to Jim Butler for the artwork and to Steve Hasler for securing approval from the Diocese and church architect.

Jim Butler has also to be thanked for the redesign and rebuild of the SMMA portable church notice boards which can now also be used to publicise other church events and have been much appreciated. Thanks to the Friends for funding this.

At the time of writing we are in the process of renewing the two Town Council No Parking signs which we have adopted and which will now match our other signs. Again, many thanks to Jim Butler for his work on this.

John Pickthorn has now been editor of 16 editions of our Parish News and together with a team of proofreaders has ensured that this important means of communication continues to be attractive and an interesting read and continues to be available to all online and in full colour in addition to the printed copies. He has also had the added challenge of getting to grips with new design software. We are most appreciative of the considerable time and effort that John devotes to this. We are particularly indebted to Patrick Li who has ensured that our advertising revenue covers the cost of production so that Parish News can continue to be free to all and we are able to increase the number of pages in each edition.

Many thanks to Hannah Razzell who keeps our Facebook and Instagram pages up to date. Do let her know if you would like any church events publicised. Links to both can be found at the bottom of each page of our website.

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 – 93 mentions in 2025! Clifford has also been a great help in updating the many leaflets at the back of the church and his attention to detail is most impressive.

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 and is easily found by search engines. It is heartening to discover new visitors to the church who have come as a result of information on the website. Thanks to Patrick Li for his help with the website and in particular for ensuring that the Sunday sermons are recorded and uploaded. Lewis Colley has also started to help with parts of the website. 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. Thanks also to Clifford Want for keeping our CofE's 'A Church Near You' website up to date.

Many thanks to Anthea Slater who provides a vital link with the Parish Office and who continues to manage the profitable lettings of the Parish Rooms and to Claire Dunn who also produces the weekly Grapevine which is a vital source of up-to-date information.

I do seem to have become the unofficial church photographer which is something I do enjoy and feel that my photographs are appreciated.

*Martin Hugall - Chair, Communications Committee
website@stmaryssaffronwalden.org*

Parish Office

It is remarkable that a year has already passed since the previous review for the Parish Office. The dedicated team of volunteers consistently ensures the efficient operation of the Parish Office each week. Sincere appreciation is extended to Jan, Lesley, Chris, Barbara, Heather, and John for their invaluable contributions every week. The team is responsible for producing the Grapevine publication, service sheets, Annual Review, and various other materials. Additionally, we have commenced the development of a new Carol song booklet to replace the existing ones, which are showing signs of wear. A

great deal has taken place over the last year. Moving church events into the Parish Rooms while the lighting project was underway went surprisingly well. As the projects completion date nears, there's a bittersweet feeling about seeing both the Wednesday service and the Tinies group return to the church. We are also working to stay updated about who holds keys within the church. If you no longer need your keys—whether because you do not use them or have moved away—please remember to return them to the Parish Office. We track all keys using our spreadsheet. Claire and I thoroughly enjoy our work, which is often extremely busy and challenging so despite no two days being the same, we wouldn't have it any other way.

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

Weddings Coordinator

In 2025, there were 17 weddings in the team ministry: eleven at Saffron Walden, two at Littlebury and one each at Swards End, Wenden, Wimbish and Hadstock.

On 21st June there were four weddings on the same day, fortunately all in different churches with different vicars, organists, bellringers and vergers but it was quite a challenge to ensure everything worked smoothly.

The highlight for me was the wedding of Douglas Kent and Catherine Peacock at St Mary's, Saffron Walden who invited all those involved in the wedding (Jeremy, Oli, choir, vergers, bellringers) to a drinks reception with live jazz at their property The Old Sun Inn which they are currently restoring. The attention to detail was impressive – from the invitations and orders of service with coloured sketches of St Mary's and the Old Sun Inn to the carefully chosen music and stunning flower arrangements.

My thanks, as ever, are due to Pam and Jan for their tireless work as vergers and to Anthea and Claire in the office.

This year we welcome Romey to the team who faces three weddings at Ashdon, two on the same day. It is wonderful to have a full team of clergy this year and I look forward to the year ahead.

*Caroline Goulder, Wedding Coordinator -
stmarysweddings@outlook.com*

Children and Youth

We currently run three weekly activities, one monthly activity and work with a team on a fortnightly activity. Some of these were kept going by a volunteer, or volunteer team before I started the role in September. Many still rely on the same volunteer or volunteers to keep going, for which I am very thankful. As a team we also participate in the planning and completion of the Family services. Having a team member in the form of Hayden Rocks, as an intern, has made providing some of these activities a lot easier, as it has meant one less volunteer to find. Hayden being a valuable member of the team for Tinies, Aftershock and the family service, whilst also assisting with junior choir as part of his role.

Sunday Club runs alongside the Sunday 10:30am Communion service. Numbers are currently low, but steady. We welcome all children, the story and activity will be aimed at Primary ages, but can be adapted for pre-schoolers, who are welcome with a parent or carer, or older children. Each week the children hear a Bible story, usually the same that is preached in the church, then do an activity in response to it. They have created posters about need or want, and God's wonderful world; they have prayed using coloured water, then candles at Candlemas; and found out about Baptism, all this term alone.

Aftershock was kept ticking over by Tracey Nicholls from Little Walden, who was able to retire from being part of the team when Hayden and I started in September. Tracy was able to pass on a list of email address for previous and present members, however

some did not return at that time having 'aged out', and since September numbers have been gradually decreasing. We have tried to increase numbers using special evenings, some proving popular – Pizzas- others less so. We believe most previous members have now got to the stage in their school careers where exams take over. We are currently canvassing opinions of some local teenagers, both Christians and non, to get some feedback over what they would like offered to them to enable us to adapt if required moving forward.

Tinies has been going well and has survived moving to the Parish Rooms for the Autumn and Spring Terms, while the church was having the new lighting done. A few of the parents and carers said they liked how cosy it felt in the Parish room, however most are looking forward to moving back to the church for the coming Summer term.

Tinies are blessed with a great volunteer team, that prepare and lead activities; make the all-important tea and toast; interact with all the children, parents and carers that come; work together on presenting the service; and most importantly tidy away after.

Numbers are steady and the only real change is that due to so many children getting nursery vouchers at three, most of the children attending are much younger than in previous years.

Youth Bible Study, held fortnightly, was established by Matt Williamson some years ago and he partnered with Katie Boyce at The Community Church; the study moved there after Matt left and the study continued under the care of Katie and others from the church every other Wednesday during term time. I joined the team in September and The Community Church also gained a new Pastor, Mark, who also joined the team. Mark suggested a resource that had been produced by the Christian Union, and we have been presenting that to the teens together. Numbers are steady, though mostly comprising members of The Community Church, with a few from other Churches too.

Sewards End Youth Club had been 'mothballed' for a while by the members of the team from Sewards End, after Matt moved away, however we have been able to resurrect it this term. We have a new volunteer alongside a couple of previous ones, and

the registration is now full. It has proved popular with many of the children of years 5 and 6 that live in Swards End, and other villages enjoying the opportunity to meet once a month.

We are building our connection with St. Mary's Primary School in various ways. Jeremy has supported the start of an 'Open the Book' group, which will be going into the school to present Bible stories to the children in an exciting way. We have secured funding for an iSing POP session for them which is timetabled to happen next spring. Finally, I am going into the school once a week for an afternoon as a volunteer, to get to know some of the children, staff and other volunteers.

Most months I am able to produce a piece for the Parish News, enabling all the congregation and the wider church community to keep up with what our Children and Youth have been doing and enjoying

*Julie Lester, Children and Youth Leader
childrenandyouth@stmaryssaffronwalden.org*

St Mary's C.E Primary School

I am very pleased to report that our C of E Primary School continues to go from strength to strength.

We are a one form entry school taking children from Reception through to Year 6 where they prepare for moving up to secondary school. Our target class size in each year is 30 pupils and is set by Essex County Council (ECC). However, we typically have class sizes of 33 to accommodate the growth of residential housing in Saffron Walden and, more importantly, the increasing number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Understanding with sensitivity and delivering the right education for SEND children is a particular strength of the school and reflects its Christian ethos and is one of the many reasons why we have no difficulty filling our classrooms.

Of course, all this comes at a cost. SEND children need and deserve extra attention in class and the funding from ECC does not cover the cost of this. The good news is that we also have a highly skilled leadership team in the school who manage their budgets with great care and wisdom and operate the school within a balanced budget. This is indeed a significant achievement given many schools really struggle to do this. Our school undoubtedly delivers value for money.

The school is indebted to the Diocese, St Mary's Church and the Friends of St Mary's (FOSM) who were previously known as the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), for their financial support and donations which are always put to good use for the benefit of the children.

One of the many highlights on the social and community school calendar last summer was the reintroduction after many years, of the school summer fete. This was organised and run by FOSM and was a huge success. We were blessed by good weather and thanks go to all the staff and parents who gave their time so willingly. We look forward to this becoming an annual event.

On the academic front our attainment statistics for Reading, Writing and Arithmetic for each year were in the vast majority of cases above the local and national average figures.

Finally, the school continues to use the church for events like Harvest Festival, Nativity Service, Carol Service and Remembrance Day amongst many others and links with the church are re-enforced every week by Revd Trew's leading of Daily Worship which the children really enjoy.

If any readers of this report would like to find out more about the church primary school please take a look at our website www.stmaryssw.org.uk where you will find lots of interesting information and if you are interested in becoming a school governor please get in touch using the email address below.

John Westnedge Chair of Governors
chairofgovernors@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk

St Mary's Guiding

Rainbows (Aged 4 -7)

The Rainbow unit has been busy this last year doing lots of different activities. During last summer, we did a badge themed around Paddington Bear, called the 'Kindness and Marmalade Challenge'. We did activities around kindness and friendship and of course made our own marmalade sandwiches to try. We also had lots of fun playing outside with equipment and our yearly outing to Bridge End Gardens maze. In the autumn we started our term with an outing to Hertfordshire Zoo organised by Girlguiding Anglia as a takeover day. Some of the Rainbows attended and had a great time despite a downpour during the afternoon.

Our badge for the autumn term was the 'Squirrel Challenge' where we did some fun autumn activities, Leaf artwork, nature walk, bird food making before rounding off with some Christmas fun. This current term we have been working on two different badges the 'Family tree' badge where we have thought about our families and the 'Spring has Sprung' badge which has included a walk around Bridge End Gardens looking at all the buds and spring flowers.

We continue to have a full unit with a very long waiting list.

Julie Lester– main contact - st.marysswguiding@gmail.com

Brownies (Aged 7 – 10)

The Brownies are always busy, with 36 individual interest badges being completed during the year of 2024 along with 16 members all completing their inventing badge, which we worked as a unit. Some of our Brownies also completed a few of the new interest badges that were recently released. 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. We have played different games, completed activities

around friendship and about leadership, have made some crafts and have been out and about on a night walk, our yearly Bridge End Gardens maze visit as well as enjoying playing outside in the church yard.

In the autumn we also started our term with an outing to Hertfordshire Zoo organised by Girlguiding Anglia as a takeover day. Some of the Brownies attended and had a great time despite a downpour during the afternoon. We were very pleased to hand out several of our Brownie Gold awards during this year to hard working Brownies.

We have a full unit with a waiting list.

Julie Lester– main contact- st.marysswguiding@gmail.com

Guides (Aged 10 – 14)

We have large friendly group of Guides that has grown over the last few terms with new young members. During our summer term last year the Guides explored different types of art completing their 'Marvellous Masterpiece' challenge badges. They also had fun on our yearly visit to Bridge End Gardens maze and on a penny hike. In the autumn we also started our term with an outing to Hertfordshire zoo organised by Girlguiding Anglia as a takeover day, some of the Guides attended and had a great time despite a downpour during the afternoon.

During the Autumn term the Guides voted to complete the 'Wicked' challenge badge looking at all things to do with magic and friendship, this including crafts and games including building broomsticks out of newspaper then having a relay race.

This current term we have been working on the runner up badge from last term's vote the 'Potato' challenge, we have played potato themed games, had a go at crisp packed weaving and have just done a chip tasting test. We also completed one of the new Guide interest badges, 'Happy Habits', which is all about adding new helpful habits to a routine.

We have our oldest members, The Rangers (aged 14 – 18), meeting alongside us. They have completed some of the same

activities as the Guides, whilst exploring some more complicated crafts and activities, along with enjoying the fellowship of Guiding.

We have a fairly full unit and a couple of younger girls on the waiting list.

Julie Lester – main contact - st.marysswguiding@gmail.com

Oasis - Men's Lunchtime Get-togethers

Our monthly lunchtime get-togethers at the Old English Gentleman on the first Wednesday of the month have continued this year, providing an opportunity for male social contact and support, particularly for those who may be living alone or who may be experiencing difficult circumstances.

Attendance is not restricted to men from St Mary's and this year we have welcomed 2 visitors and one regular new face from outside the Parish.

Overall attendance at 85 for the year is slightly down on last year, largely due to health issues, but our monthly average is 7, ranging from 5 to 9.

Bill Rose: wjr2163@gmail.com 01799 516609

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee monitors the income, expenditure and financial assets of St Mary's and met on three occasions in 2025. 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

Additionally the Committee reviews the interim management accounts, variances from Budget, cash reserves and the reserves policy.

2025 was the second year in a row since the pandemic when the Church achieved a surplus of income over expenditure. The generosity of parishioners donating to the running expenses of the Church via the Stewardship scheme remains especially important – £168,300 in 2025, although well down on the pre-Covid figure of £199,168 in 2019. This is reflected in the number of parishioners who have set up Stewardship standing orders falling from 143 in 2019 to 108 last year. Weekly average attendance at services has fallen from 245 to 177 over the same period, although these numbers benefit from higher congregation numbers for the major services at Easter and Christmas. Despite these lower attendance numbers Collections at services are within £1,000 of the 2019 level at nearly £19,000, with the Blue Safe and CollecTin together now generating more than the collecting Basket. We continue to benefit from occasional one-off fund raisers like the Christmas Fair (over £4,000), fees from Weddings and Funerals and the income from letting out Church premises to third parties (together over £18,000).

Expenses in 2025 were lower than in 2024, partly as a result of the delay in appointing a new Youth Worker following Matt Williamson's resignation in 2024 – Julie Lester only started in September 2025.

The final outcome for the year was a surplus of current income (£264,854) over expenditure (£255,177) of £9,677.

The major capital project in 2025 was of course the renewal of the Lighting System. This has been extensively written about elsewhere, with the Finance Committee and PCC being kept abreast of all material developments. The Project was fully funded by June 2025, with particular support from the Friends of

St Mary's. Work began in August and the new system was handed over to the Church in early March 2026. Final costs should be known by the end of April but will exceed £200,000. We were fortunate to be able to reclaim a significant amount of VAT on the Project costs from the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. This will not be available to us in future as the Government has changed the basis on which it will support listed buildings. Future capital projects will therefore cost 20% more, in order to pay the VAT.

*Treasurer, David Birchall - davidjbirchall57David@gmail.com
Richard Garvey – Finance Committee*

Property Management Committee

The Property Committee continued to manage all of our buildings throughout the year and there was a lot of activity and a great deal achieved as usual. Taking our buildings one-by-one, the major items addressed in addition to many smaller and routine maintenance items, and the major lighting project, were as follows:

The Church.

- All of the amplifiers, radio microphones and the mic. on the eagle lectern on the sound system were replaced.
- The cracked 7th bell in bell chamber was re-cast and re-installed and the opportunity taken to inspect and repair, as needed, the bearings on all of the bells.
- Repairs were carried out to the lead of the south aisle roof following the discovery of cracks on several panels.
- The tower floodlights were replaced with LED lighting.
- Quinquennial repairs from the 2022 inspection started to be addressed including repairs to various floor slabs, the church entrances and to the medallion of the Virgin Mary in the window at the west end of the north aisle.

- The choir took delivery of a good quality Bechstein piano which was a gift from a parishioner and which is now in the north chapel.

The Parish Rooms.

- Repairs to the roof.
- Overhaul of the sound system and installation of a new amplifier and loop amplifier.
- Repair to the drain at the front of the building, which has been partially successful in reducing water ingress into the building.
- Redecoration of all windows on the north and west sides of the building.

The Curate's House.

- A lot of work was done to tidy up the hedges and garden when the curate moved out and to re-landscape the wooden sleeper walls to the various levels of the garden.
- Vivian Falk managed a large set of repairs throughout the property to ready it to be let. This showed that more frequent and regular maintenance and inspection is required.
- A tenant was appointed in May, left in November and a new tenant appointed in December, the latter after further repairs and the replacement of the cooker just in time for Christmas.

The Verger's Cottage.

- Repairs to the roof.
- Repairs and replacement of the rendering on the north and west walls.
- Repairs and redecoration to all the windows.

Finally, the committee brought in a new process for progressing and monitoring the regular maintenance of items on each of our buildings, e.g. boiler servicing, alarm servicing and

this has ensured that we are up-to-date on all required, regular maintenance.

Steve Hasler - s.hasler@btopenworld.com

Lighting Project Final Report

Following the initial design work, public consultation, PCC approval of the detailed design and the faculty application in 2024, the project to replace our failing lighting made a lot of progress in 2025. The installation of the lighting was tendered to five possible contractors late in 2024 and the bids for the work were received in January. After short-listing 2 firms, Tom Flynn Electrical, who have a lot of experience installing lighting in listed churches, were awarded the contract. Faculty approval was achieved on 14th March and the installation was being planned for later in the year.

However, the prices in the tender bids were higher than expected and in January 2025 the government announced that the amount of VAT which could be recovered on improvements and repairs on listed church buildings was capped at £25,000 p.a. These two factors gave rise to an unexpected and very large shortfall in the funds available to complete the project. Our lighting team, working with our lighting designers, found over £55,000 of cost savings which reduced the tender price considerably but we were still left with a gap of £30,000 to cover the VAT impact.

Our fundraising team produced and submitted six grant applications, four of which were successful and two of which were withdrawn when all the funds were raised. The Friends of St Mary's very generously increased their pledge and more donations and support were forthcoming from church members and townspeople. The final funds available were

- The Friends of St Mary's - £50,000

- Essex Community Foundation (matched funding from an anonymous donor) - £45,000
- Individual Giving - congregation and town - £46,000
- Congregation and General Trust - £15,000
- Friends of Essex Churches Trust - £6,500
- Stansted Airport - £5,000
- Church of England Decarbonisation Scheme - £3,000
- The balance - from church reserves

With full funding secured, installation started on 4th August with initial work at ground level and work on the ceiling starting in mid-September in line with Natural England guidance which takes into account of the presence of a small, summer, maternity roost of bats under the chancel roof. By the end of November when worked paused for Advent and Christmas, the new lighting for the south and north aisles and the downlights in the nave had been completed and these, representing approx. 40% of the new lighting, were handed over with a temporary set of controls. Use of the new lighting throughout December allowed a list of areas requiring attention to be developed, which were to be addressed in the early part of 2026.

The progress of the project was due to the effort of a lot of people. The Lighting Team of Steve Hasler, Rev'd Paula Griffiths, Vivian Falk, Denis Tindley, Noel Starr, Edward Gildea, Barbara Flaxman and, at the start of the project, Mike Felgate and the late Lawrence Gooderham. And the Fundraising Team of Steve Hasler, Simon Potter, Lisa Brook, Ralph Meloy, Chris Knight, David Birchall and, at the start, Anna Martin.

Steve Hasler - s.hasler@btopenworld.com

Friends of Saffron Walden Parish Church

The Friends continue to flourish with 14 new members this year making a total of 110.

Our noticeboard continues to attract interest as we report on our various activities. We had two Cathedral trips during the year, the

first to the medieval Cathedral of Lichfield in April where we were met by the many life-sized sculptures on the west entrance from St Chad to Queen Victoria. Really interesting guides took us on the journey around the Cathedral. After a lunch together we explored the city, the parks and the pool (lake size) in the sunshine.

In October we visited Canterbury Cathedral, another treat. Our tour guides took us through the 1400 years of history from Saint Augustus in 597 through to Thomas Beckett in 1170 , damage caused by the Civil War in 1642 and now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Whilst we were in the Cathedral the announcement was made of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally which was really exciting. A really relaxing day.

In August we had our Bring & Share lunch together, after the 10.30am service, which everyone enjoyed and we look forward to the same this year.

In May we had a really interesting talk by Sir John Coles entitled "The Real Margaret Thatcher". This attracted a lot of our members plus non members from the Church and the town.

This was followed in Jan '26 by a really well attended talk by Julie Kendall and Mark Vernon on their Camino De Santiago Walk.

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 had our AGM which this year was again extremely well attended.

We had our usual table at the Christmas Fair and ran a raffle for a framed picture which was donated. It proved to be a good promotion for the Friends and attracted a lot of interest.

The Friends made a considerable contribution to the Lighting Project and we were delighted to see them displayed at the service in March.

You will have noticed the new blue boards around the Church which we funded and are really pleased with, hope you are too.

Two new members were co-opted to the Council this year, John and Alison Forster (both Welcomers) who have taken on the role of Events Secretaries, so we continue to have members of the

Council who are involved in a mixture of Church activities. Rebekah Auty has taken on the role of Minutes Secretary. We look forward to a busy year ahead.

Pamela Mugliston - pjmteddybear@btinternet.com

The Parish Archives

I suppose by definition when talking about Archives, you are always looking back ? But, I 'look forward' to receiving new additions to St Mary's Muniment Room based Archive all the time.

Considering the fact that we have Parish Magazines going back month by month to the 1880s, every month we add our most recent publications to that record of Parish life, so it is very much an ongoing piece of work.

Once again I ask that if you have documents relating to the life of our church that you consider worth saving, please let me know as we don't just store Parish Magazines!

Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop. Archivist.

St Mary's Organ Working Group

The organ at St Mary's is the largest in Essex with some parts being 200 years old. It's been built and moved and rebuilt several times and it's coming to the end of its useful life. A small group of people from different parts of the church family, some with a musical background and some very much not, are working together to consider and plan ahead for the future. At some point, without action, we expect we will no longer be able to rely on the organ. It's a big and long term project which we are breaking down into stages.

Starting in 2024, we have been working together to build a clear picture of all the ways we currently use the organ, for worship and the Glory of God, for our congregations, for outreach, for Saffron Walden and the wider community, for children and young people

in our choirs and music groups and for the wider church teaching future generations of organists. We carried out a listening exercise to understand more about how sound travels around our church building and how different locations for parts of organs might sound to people in different parts of St Mary's at a service, concert or devotional offering. Now we are starting to capture options for the future and find out if these are feasible so that they then can be properly and prayerfully considered.

Lisa Brook

Dr David & Sári Gardner's work with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Romania

It has been a very busy year for Sári & David Gardner as they continue their life's work of supporting Bible translation in several languages. In Romania there is now growing support for a "Standard Romani" language, resulting in a need amongst churches and schools for Standard Romani Scripture and teaching materials.

A team of mother-tongue translators has been formed. Sári and David work alongside them to provide training for new translators, together with exegetical and technical support. They also aid checking before submission to formal, Consultant led, checking. This team is currently finalising translation of Mathew and Luke and has already completed Mark, John and Acts.

+Following the award of her Masters degree, Sári has now been certified as a Translation Consultant to Wycliffe Bible Translation teams. Her latest task has been to check and verify some Old Testament passages in an Asian language, a task that has demanded tact and diplomacy as well as Biblical knowledge. In addition to supporting the Standardised Romani project, David is heavily involved with programming the PTXprint typesetting program and with providing technical support to the increasing number of users all over the world. PTXprint is an invaluable tool which dramatically reduces the time (often months) required to prepare Scripture publications for printing. This program can

handle typescript whether it is read up/down or left/right with Latin or other scripts.

David and Sári attend the local village church as well as an English worship service in the local town. Their youngest son Erik finished his two year catechism course this past year and was confirmed in April. He is now in his final year at the local school and will take highly competitive school transfer examinations in the summer. He also assists the local church by running the live streaming of Saturday and Sunday services each week.

Emma, their youngest daughter, did well in her first year at university, which resulted in ongoing financial support for tuition and accommodation. She is currently doing well in her second university year, leading a very busy academic and social life. Aniko is married and living in Slovakia. She is working in the French financial services department for an international company. Her future plans include learning to drive, learning Slovakian and starting university in September. Mark is currently working as a programmer with a view to completing his degree in the summer.

The late night online sessions caused by working with translators who have other day jobs probably do not help, but David has been plagued by ongoing disrupting illnesses. The other members of the family are keeping well.

Their visit to England in the summer went well. In addition to continuing their various support and consulting roles (the bedroom became an office), they attended a Wycliffe conference and visited a number of churches and supporters around the country. On a short family holiday in North Wales they unexpectedly met a retired CofE minister who had discovered the work of Wycliffe on a trip to Africa. He was so impressed by the importance of this work that he took on the role of Wycliffe representative for North Wales.

The financial support from St Mary's, which represents about 10% of their income, has been particularly important this year. The year has been particularly challenging with generally increasing costs as well as unexpected problems. Major

expenses in 2026 will include installing mains water and sewage to the house as well as essential repair or replacement of Sári's overused and much travelled laptop.

Visitors to Romania are as always welcome and prayerful support remains essential.

Gerald Gardner

PCC members, March 2026

Rev'd Jeremy Trew, (Chair) Rev'd Ella Harris, Marisa Baltrock, Tracey Nicholls, Rev'd Hilary Walker, Canon Judith Hasler, Rev'd Lynda 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) Shawn Martin (Deanery Synod Representative), Noël Starr, Martin Hugall, Steve Hasler, Robin O'Neill, Lisa Brook, Bron Ferland, Patrick Li, Hannah Razzell, Jan Siewertsen, Rufus Barnes, Gill Gibson, Helen Nash, Oliver King (co-opted Director of Music).

Anna Martin stmaryssaffronwaldenpcc@gmail.com