

# Woodbridge, St. Mary



Annual Report 2021

# Parochial Church Council 2021

<b>Chairman</b>	The Rev'd Nigel Prior
<b>Deacon</b>	The Rev'd Andy Todd (R.I.P.)
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Mr Stephen Cole
<b>Churchwardens</b>	Mr David Sharples Miss Veronica Howe
<b>Diocesan Synod Representatives through the Deanery Synod</b>	Mrs Penny Bird Mrs Mary Hare
<b>Deanery Synod Representatives (until 2023)</b>	Mrs Penny Bird Mrs Mary Hare Mrs Rita James
<b>Churches Together in Woodbridge and Melton</b>	Mrs Penny Bird Mrs Barbara Stear
<b>Honorary Treasurer</b>	Mr Phil Poole
<b>Honorary Secretary</b>	Mrs Joanne Lovett
<b>Elected Lay Members</b>	Mr David Berridge Mrs Michelle Bullard Mr Stephen Cole Mrs Margaret Davidson Mrs Margaret Harper Mr Jeremy Hawksley Mrs Margaret Harper Ms Melanie Pearson (stepped down) Mrs Janice Poulson Mrs Barbara Stear

## OFFICERS NOT ON THE PCC

<b>Planned Giving Secretary (Parish Giving Scheme, Covenants/Gift Aid)</b>	Mr Michael Holland
<b>With Permission to Officiate</b>	The Rev'd Dr John Hare The Rev'd Peter Wintgens

## **Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting**

**Held at 7.30pm, 17th May 2021 in St. Mary's Church, Woodbridge.**

The Rector opened the meeting with two prayers.

### **1 – Apologies for absence had been received from:**

Mr Geoff English & Mrs Heather Marshall.

### **2 – Meetings of the Annual Vestry Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020:**

Approval of the minutes of the meeting was: Proposed  
Seconded  
Carried Unanimously

### **3- Churchwardens' Accounts.**

£250 had been paid out in the past year split between three families and two individuals.

Support for those in need can be handed out at any time of the year, although traditionally this is done at Christmas time. If you are aware of families or individuals that are in need of support please give their names to the churchwardens.

Mr Tony Hubbard was thanked for auditing the books. He asked everyone to sign the ancient ledger before leaving the meeting.

### **4a – Election of Churchwardens.**

Barbara Stear had given seven years of service to the role of Churchwarden. Barbara was due to step down at the end of six years, but had her arm twisted and was persuaded to carry on for another year, which was a difficult year due to COVID and a gap between rectors. Barbara is good with people, has a huge smile, and is excellent at digging. Barbara was very keen and raring to go at the tree planting ceremony. Barbara was given a small present of a bouquet and the golden heart-shaped balloon from the previous Sunday's service. A main thank you present would be presented the next Sunday.

Barbara replied that it had been an honour to be Churchwarden.

### **4b – Fr. Nigel had received two nominations for Churchwarden:**

Mr David Sharples	Proposed by Mrs Barbara Stear Seconded by Miss Veronica Howe
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Miss Veronica Howe	Proposed by Stephen Cole Seconded by Mrs Val English
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As there were no other candidates both candidates were elected unanimously and appointed to serve until the next Annual Parochial Church Meeting which will be no later than 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022. Fr. Nigel thanked both churchwardens for all their work in the past year and looked forward to working with David and Veronica in the coming year.

The meeting ended at 7.40pm.



**St Mary's Church, Woodbridge**  
**Churchwardens' Accounts for Year ending 31 December 2021**

**JOHN SAYER'S CHARITY (SAYER'S CHARITY 1637 AND SAYER'S GIFT 1638 NOW MERGED INTO ONE)**

Balance at 31 December 2020	£1853-22
Income	358-93
Interest	0-22
<b>Balance at 31 December 2021</b>	<b>£2212-37</b>

**NB Amount for grants paid out in December 2021, to be withdrawn from bank account in 2022, owing to Covid and bank access issues prior to Christmas 2021). Grants amounted to £250.**

**WALTER BLOXSOME'S GIFT**

Balance at 31 December 2020	£ 1785-38
Income	72-97
Interest	0-30
<b>Balance at 31 December 2021</b>	<b>£1858-65</b>

Signed V. Attave ..... VA Howe, Churchwarden

Signed D. J. Sharples ..... J D Sharples, Churchwarden

Signed N. J. Prior ..... N J Prior, Rector

The accounts have been examined and found to be correct.

Signed A. J. Hubbard ..... A J Hubbard

28th March 2022

**Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting,  
Held at 7.50pm, 17th May 2021 in St. Mary's Church, Woodbridge.**

**Apologies received from:**

Mr Geoff English & Mrs Heather Marshall

**1. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020.**

Minutes were approved from the last APCM proposed by Mr David Berridge  
Seconded by Ms Rita James  
Carried unanimously

**2. Election of Lay Members to the Parochial Church Council**

There were seven vacancies on the PCC, two unfilled positions from last year, three positions from people coming to the end of their term, and two from members who had stepped down. Nominations had been received for five of the places.

Mr Stephen Cole proposed by Miss Veronica Howe and seconded by Mrs Joanne Lovett  
Mrs Barbara Stear proposed by Ms Rita James and seconded by Mrs Mary Hare  
Mrs Michelle Bullard proposed by Mrs Barbara Stear and seconded by Mr Stephen Cole  
Mrs Janice Poulson proposed by Mrs Barbara Stear and seconded by Miss Veronica Howe  
Mr Jeremy Hawksley proposed by Ms Rita James and seconded by Mrs Susan Todd

All were agreed unanimously. The new members were reminded that this would be for a term of five years' service, as per last year's APCM.

Fr. Nigel thanked those members of the PCC stepping down: Sue Todd, Sarah Lines and Jeremy Hawksley for their contribution, and welcomed the new members.

**3. Parochial Church Council Accounts**

The Trustees Annual Report and Financial Report for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 accompanied with explanatory notes had been available prior to the meeting. Mr David Sharples gave a description of the Accounts.

David began by saying that all the accounts had been agreed and all signed off. The accounts this year had taken on a new format in the Charity Commission style and featured 'Objectives & Activities', 'Achievement & Performance' & 'Future Plans'. Fr. Nigel was thanked by David for helping with the clearer layout of accounts, and Michael Holland was thanked for producing the new style of accounts.

Every cost had been kept down during the lockdown period resulting in the deficit being lower than was expected at £11K. There had been some expenditure during the year. The maintenance to the bell frame had been completed and giving device had been installed in the church.

The various bank accounts had been reviewed and two new bank accounts opened. Cater Allen who held the old accounts, which made life particularly difficult, and these accounts were to be closed along with other existing accounts and all are to be moved over to new ones in the next few months. Changes had also been made as to who operates the accounts, and this has been taken on by Mrs Katherine Lowe, who has been trained. The new treasurer would find the new accounting system and accounts easier to manage.

In the set of accounts for 2020 there had been recognition of the bequest left to St. Mary's Church, Woodbridge by Dr. James Harper. Professional advice was sought and as probate had been executed this bequest had to be accounted for; the estimated amount of the bequest is £700K

Enormous thanks were given to David for dealing with a huge change in the accounting and also for his service over the past ten years.

Accounts were proposed by Mr Tony Hubbard and seconded.

#### **4. Appointment of Account Examiners**

The finance committee are to look for a lower cost provider to examine the accounts. Once found this will be reviewed by the PCC.

#### **5. Report on the Electoral Roll**

Electoral roll was two more than last year standing at 190 at today's date. This is a very low number and work needs to be done to persuade people to enrol. The list of the current roll is at the back of the church.

#### **6. Report from the PCC**

Annual Reports for 2020 are available separately.

#### **Report from the Deanery Synod**

The Deanery Synod had struggled over the past year. As a reflection of the church in the 35 parishes, seven had no representatives to the Deanery Synod. The next Deanery Synod meeting is 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and they are looking for a venue large enough to hold the event. This could be Orford church or here at St. Mary's, Woodbridge. We are to take stock of the new Deanery plan as we come out of lockdown, this was to happen in September, but will not happen then as there is a new team of clergy in the deanery.

#### **7. Report on Fabric and ornaments of the Church**

Thanks to Mr Simon Morris for looking after the building. Also, a thank you when called out for the disturbances in the porch.

#### **8. Chairperson's Report**

It goes without saying that the last year has not been at all normal and it seems extraordinary that my first APCM here was only 7 months ago! Despite two Lockdowns, we managed to celebrate in between, both Christmas and Easter and we had as many people as we could squeeze in. I am grateful to Val and Veronica and all our sides-people/cleaners who made that possible with their gloves on and armed with their bottles of Dettol! Thanks to Bob and the choir also for taking the rules seriously enough without downing tools completely. We did well to do what we did, and no-one caught on fire at our memorable Easter Vigil! Also, to those who have made the re-openings of church for private prayer possible, a big thank you. Let's hope those days of imposed restrictions are soon behind us, as we gradually ease out into safer waters.

We legally became a United Benefice from the beginning of 2021 but it is still early days to see how we can work more closely together. What kind of collective future might be encouraged is something both our PCCs are meeting up for at our combined 'Away Day' on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, which is a great start. If you turn to the heading 'Future Plans' on p.5 of the Trustees Annual Report, this is highlighted in points 3a and 3b.

I have to confess that all four points have been written by me on behalf of the PCC Trustees. I have had plenty of thinking time and space, but I have also consulted and met all those involved with the different areas covered, whether by Zoom or in person. I really have done my best to keep our corporate church interests as active as possible and have already begun to prioritise where I believe greater teamwork is needed. If we turn to section 4, only one group officially exists and that's the newly formed 'Communications Group' which has been really busy behind the scenes (as well in front) when literally, livestreaming many of our services and big occasions. I think particularly of the National Day of Reflection in March – which may well become an annual event to mark those lives lost nationally to Covid-19. I think of yesterday with the gold balloons and next Sunday with everyone wearing something red. We will look back on these recorded moments as reminders how well we have kept going during a pandemic and, hopefully, how our faith has sustained and supported us. Of course, it is an ongoing discussion whether we should continue to offer Zoom and livestreaming worship but if people respond positively and enthusiastically to that thought, then I and many others will concur.

I was surprised when I came, to find there was no Finance Committee (or support group if you prefer), and that is now going to change because the days of leaving everything for just one person to do is just unreasonable. But as David has said, we are modernizing the way we do our banking and have already made some significant improvements. And in my time, Michael and Katherine have played a big part in easing the burdens of everyday responsibility for what I am sure you will all agree, is a complex set of Finances. We are also wanting to set up a Fabric & Maintenance Committee – again, to share the burden of work and detail and time involved. If I told you that correspondence over the Churchyard pillars and gates has continued over more than 20 years, aren't I the lucky Incumbent to see this restoration and improvement soon to be realised?

On the asterisked 4 c) d) and e) sections, I am suggesting we could explore sharing these opportunities for imaginative service, with both our churches, moving forwards. 'No man or woman is an island' so I really want you to know now how passionate I am about everyone using their God-given gifts and, freely and willingly. Bridges are better than walls.

If I may jump now to sections 2a) and b) this planning is very much under way – as you will have read concerning the revamped 'Building Strategy group' with some really keen and excited new members. I really want everyone to see the drawings at the back tonight and the many copies we have around the noticeboards for you to be encouraged by before you go. A big thank you to Diane in particular who wrote up the Terms of Reference for the St Mary's House Project back in 2013.

I must be careful not to say that Suffolk moves slowly but instead for me to say tonight: a huge THANK YOU to everyone involved for arriving where we are. It is going to be expensive (but we have a good Legacy endorsement now) and it is still ambitious, not least because we are looking at developing and modernising the whole of the building and not just part of it; but it really is now that we need your help to get going and to launch our plans and, Appeal, sometime in the Autumn. Alongside this we have to get much more community interest and support in why we want to do this and who it is ultimately for.

It is for the whole community of Woodbridge – and just to give you an example, the former Caterpillar Children's Centre (run by East Suffolk Council) is in need of a new home since closure and we could be that helping hand to enable them to get back in action - at the heart of Market Hill and under the umbrella of St Mary's. Before the summer holidays, we will dedicate a Sunday to saying a lot more to



our congregations and being more transparent (instead of secretive) because, I do believe, the Lord is at work in this Project and has been from day one.

This leads me to point 1 and that our ministry to local families has undoubtedly suffered a setback for obvious reasons. The update on our own activities does or should give us all a glimmer of hope because the families are still around us and finding their feet post- Covid. But as with everything I am saying, this ministry can only happen with teamwork and new volunteers, people who are passionate about the energy of God infusing.

Finally, I want to say a big thank you to Fr John and Peter who continue to help me and you, liturgically, and in so many other pastoral ways; to say how sorry I was to lose Siw Carlsson so early on. I shall miss her great qualities of wisdom and mischief and her commitment to pastoral support, particularly at Seckford Alms-houses', and conducting many funerals too, over recent years. Dear Andy is also very much in our prayers as he bravely faces chemo and radiotherapy treatments concurrently. I saw him and Sue in the shop last week and at the moment he is a model patient, I have to say, who never complains at all.

I am happy to take any questions you may have because this is not supposed to be a sermon. I apologise if I have preached a little!

Thank you.  
Fr Nigel

#### **9. Any Other Business**

Please remember to sign the parish ledger at the end of the meeting when you leave.

No other business was raised.

The meeting ended with the Grace at 8.20pm.

# Reports for 2021

## Safeguarding

At the time of writing and recruitment checks are behind schedule, although neither has contributed to any increased risk to members of the congregation. Evidence of this is that individuals have made contact with the PSO about potential safeguarding issues, which suggest that reporting procedures are understood. The PSO has liaised with the diocese and no issue has yet to reach the threshold for further action.

## Charities supported by St. Mary's 2021

Throughout the year, individuals continued to pursue their own favoured charities - not least the food bank co-ordinated by the Woodbridge Salvation Army - and supported also from our own Harvest Festival. Some members continued to make donations to The Children's Society and discrete groups contributed to funds for other needs. As a church we began negotiations to set up a hub for the asylum seekers expected to be accommodated locally, but their arrival in the town did not happen. Offers of practical help were made too.

Some of the products stocked in the Church Shop were from Fair Trade and other ethical and sustainable producers and companies, while we continued to serve Fair Trade coffee and tea throughout the year and, indeed, also ran a couple of FT coffee mornings.

Other causes that benefited from specific monetary collections, or giving in kind, included:

The Bishops' Lent Appeal for Kagera

Christian Aid

The Mission to Seafarers

Suffolk Refugee Support

Suffolk Family Carers

Thus, in our very small way, we tried to support a few of those needing it locally, within our County, the UK or much further afield.

## St. Mary's PCC Secretary's Report 2021

Please see report 'Review of 2021' in the 'Trustees Annual Report 2021'.

## Altar Guild

This past year has been an up and down one and my wonderful team of 'Altar Guilders' has responded by being in church every Friday morning. The care of the silver and linen used at the services has been well maintained and the cleaning of the High Altar area. The Epiphany Chapel has been out of use due to COVID.

Please may I thank *Janice Poulson and Gillian Gurdon; Judy Foster and Joyce Parlett; Anna Jenkins and Carole Marsden; Vi Woolmer; and Jean Waller* for their continuing service to the Altar Guild. Grateful thanks, as you make my job such a pleasure.

Carole and Vi are leaving the Parish very soon. May I take this opportunity to sincerely thank them for all their dedication and hard work for the Altar Guild, especially Vi, as she has served the church for over 25 years. I do hope that they find joy and happiness in their new homes (Cheshire and Derbyshire respectively). I have one new member, Kirsten Berridge, to warmly welcome and will search for more recruits.

Barbara Stear

## **Bell Ringers**

After lockdown, we were eventually able to resume bellringing in the summer of 2021. At first this was just for the main Sunday Morning service, after all that is what we exist for, i.e. to inform the people of Woodbridge that Church worship is about to take place.

In the early autumn, after the holiday periods we returned to holding our regular Tuesday evening practices.

We may be a small band in numbers, but we are all very loyal. Since resuming ringing, we have rung for every main Sunday morning service. On our practice nights we have started to be a bit more adventurous in what we attempt to ring, for example a performance known as 'Devon Call Changes'. During the past few months a few of us have joined the ringers at Campsea Ashe at their Saturday morning practices, which is allowing some of us to extend our 'method' ringing abilities.

During the year we have been training two new recruits, namely Meg Cook and Michael Barrett. Both are making good progress, and it won't be too long before they will be able to ring 'free range'.

Bruce Wakefield

## **Choir**

Another very unusual year overall, but one in which we gradually began to emerge from the Covid Curse!

We had very limited notice from the Government about when we could begin to sing again on Palm Sunday, and a maximum of 6 singers was imposed.

Fortunately, the 6 choristers that I asked immediately responded positively so that we could sing the hymns on Palm Sunday.

Thereafter, we had 6 singers at each service throughout Easter. The choir members were so very understanding and cooperative with my selection of choristers on a rota system. I was truly grateful for their support, and we were able to sing hymns, Responsorial Psalms and the odd easy anthem during that time.

We continued to raise a choir of 6 throughout the next 3 months, producing a simple anthem during the communion on each occasion.

In August, we were allowed to have a bigger choir once again, limited only by space, in that we had to remain socially distanced to sing.

It was in August (6<sup>th</sup>) that we were all devastated by the news of Rev Andy Todd's death. Not only was Andy a much loved assistant Curate, but he had been, firstly a bass and thereafter a tenor (when I really needed tenors!), in the choir for 30+ years.

We were all honoured to sing at his Requiem Mass on 2<sup>nd</sup> September and on this occasion, we created space enough for a virtually full choir, who sang out their hearts.

In 2021, we celebrated our Patronal Festival, for the first time, on 15<sup>th</sup> August. Though a number of choristers were away, owing to it being in the middle of the school holidays, we managed to sing a 'Simon Clover arrangement for SATB' of the Schubert Ave Maria, in which Helena Galley sang the solo part beautifully. It appeared to be gratefully received by the congregation.

On September 5<sup>th</sup>, Patronal Festival was celebrated at St. Mary's, Great Bealings and a volunteer choir of 14 drove over to take part in and sing at the service. It was a lovely occasion followed by a barbecue in the churchyard.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, I became 70 years old, and I had previously made the decision to retire as choirmaster when I became 70.

Fr. Nigel suggested that we celebrate my 45 years with a service, and I elected to have a Choral Evensong on the Feast of Christ the King on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

Our full St. Mary's Choir, supplemented by a number of past choristers – some from as far away as Somerset and Nottinghamshire, sang the most lovely Evensong Service, which I delighted in sharing with them. Fr. Nigel secretly arranged for an ex-colleague and very dear friend of mine – Canon Roy Tricker – to preach the sermon.

Kind members of the congregation organised a buffet at the end of the evening, and I was presented with some very extravagant gifts from the choir and congregation.

I am so grateful to both the people who came to church to join in 'my' final service and to all those, who contributed to my touching and extravagant gifts.

I am very grateful to my fellow organists: Andrew Clarke, Andrew Garfath-Cox, John Penny, Malcolm Russell, Derek Cole, Paul Foster and Arthur Watts for all of their support and musical expertise over the years. I am also very grateful to Simon Clover (Bass), who has provided us with some excellent musical arrangements of hymns and anthems and who has been a constant support over the last few years – a very talented man.

Bob Peggall

March 21<sup>st</sup> 2022

## **Church Cleaning (Dusting)**

During 2021 and 2022 the care of the church pews has been done by Linda, our employed cleaner for St. Mary's House.

However, there are five ladies on the dusting rota who in other years have kept our pews, choir stalls, and wooden areas in the church beautifully clean. They work independently and are responsible for their own section of the church to dust twice monthly. Whenever the time is right, they will start to be in the church again.

May I take this opportunity to thank Jenni Beesley, Michelle Bullard, Gillian Gurdon, Anna Jenkins and Sandra Schur for their care?

Barbara Stear

## Church Cleaning (Floors)

Our volunteers continued to be available during this unusual time when closures of the church building and other special arrangements have meant that we are still not back to our usual rotas. We are always happy to welcome new volunteers and are a couple short at the moment. Do come forward if you are happy to vacuum half the church floor once every 6 weeks. A huge thank-you to Tony Waller for shepherding the team until last year, to all the volunteers for their support, and to Linda for keeping the place tidy during this transitional period.

Anna Jenkins

## The Church Shop

The last twelve months has been another challenging year for the Church Shop as we navigated through various restrictions. Our volunteers have worked hard to ensure our customers feel safe and able to shop in a safe environment. We are slowly extending our opening hours due to the commitment of our volunteers. A huge thank you to all our volunteers past and present!

Our range of products is steadily expanding with more Fairtrade items - tea, coffee, chocolate, socks, cocoa, biscuits, cereals and gifts as well as ethically sourced olive oil, dates and spices. We have a wide choice of locally printed cards many featuring East Anglian artists to suit every occasion and competitively priced too.

Thank you for making a positive choice to support the Church Shop this year. We hope you will continue to drop in for a chat, choose a card or two, treat yourself to a chocolate bar, look for your next book to read, grab a bag of sugar to bake a cake, get a box of cereal for breakfast or snap up a pair of Fairtrade socks to keep warm!

Sue Todd

## Churches Together

Over the last year church representatives from our 7 churches have met together four times. St. Mary's Great Bealings now form a benefice with St. Mary's Woodbridge so have a representative.

**Prayer meeting.** A monthly Zoom prayer meeting is organised by our chair, Lyn Spall, on the first day of each month at 7.00p.m. and has taken place throughout the year. If church members do not want or cannot Zoom they can still send in prayer requests. Meeting ID; 819 191 3344 Passcode; 047188.

**Climate Sunday event held on 19th September 2021.** This event in Kingston Field went extremely well with excellent speakers and interesting stall holders. All the churches members helped, not only the church representatives. For St. Mary's may I especially thank Rita James who contacted the main speaker and organised St. Mary's stall. We received very positive feedback from the people who attended and the participants.

**Woodbridge Climate Walk 6th November** Following on from the above event a walk through Woodbridge was organised by Transition Woodbridge on Saturday 6th November and all of our church groups joined in with 300+ people.

**Christmas Cards** were printed and distributed for the first time for two years. Unfortunately, we could not involve the school children so appropriate photos were sought from people in the local area.

**Woodbridge Climate event April 2-3rd.** Churches Together had a stall organised by Dave and Jacquie Tricker from Quay Street church. The event was well attended.

**Walk of Witness on Good Friday.** This year will start in Elmhurst Park and walk through the town with readings at points from all of the churches and return to the park for a service.

Thanks to Lyn Spall, our chair, for her ongoing energy and support which has kept our events “on the road”.

Barbara Stear

## **Christian Aid**

Both Lent Lunches at the Salvation Army and the Christian Aid Week house-to-house collection had to be cancelled due to the Covid 19 restrictions so all we could do was encourage donations online or by post. Prospects for 2021 are not good but we do plan to deliver envelopes only during Christian Aid Week to prompt donations.

Tony Waller

## **Communications - Benefice Website, Social Media and St. Mary's Live-streaming**

Our communications with each other, both within and outside the Church, remain dependent on a mix of online and digital, as well as printed, because of continuing restrictions caused by the pandemic. As with most large church communities this mix has now become a recognised expectation and will remain a constant offer for the future.

Our present website was designed in 2019. It was refined in 2021 to represent the new Benefice and is our most comprehensive way of communicating. Regular weekly updates provide details of just about everything that's happening in the Benefice - the weekly pew sheet, links to service live-streams, transcripts of sermons, posters, dates & times of future events, current news, plus links to courses, videos etc.

Our Facebook page has been 'paused' in recent months but will hopefully be active again in the near future.

Improvements to upgrade our ageing and previously unreliable church sound system to a more dependable audio-visual system were completed in May 2021 and at the same time a cleverly designed two camera live-streaming set-up was installed. Our first live-stream with the new setup was on 6 June 2021. The live-streaming system allows for an operator to change to one of eight camera positions depending on where in the church the focus is required - for example the chancel, nave, lectern, font. (This is a smaller version of the system used in both Bury St Edmunds and Norwich Cathedrals.) We have 48 signed-up subscribers to our live-stream service and the number of people who watch weekly, either live or later, varies widely - anything from 55 to 115, rising to higher numbers for church festival services.

Rita James

## **Concerts**

2021 saw the return of live music to St. Mary's (Woodbridge) on October 8<sup>th</sup> with a stunning recital by Ronan Magill – a concert pianist of international renown with strong links to Suffolk. His talent was recognised early on by Benjamin Britten and his career has taken him all over the world. A large and appreciative audience gave him a warm welcome and in turn were treated to a fine evening of music. We are looking forward to Ronan returning to St. Mary's on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Woodbridge Choral Society gave two concerts at the end of the year. The first, in November was an atmospheric performance of Anneliese, by James Whitbourne based on the diary of Anne Frank. This was followed in December by Handel's Messiah – a popular choice with some fine singing from a group of young soloists, ably supported by the Choir and enjoyed by a large audience.

Also, in December we had the Riverside Musical theatre Company's annual festive extravaganza – a very popular evening with a full house. The capacity audience enjoyed an evening of warm fantastic singing.

In November we were also delighted to welcome back Jazz quartet, Joyspring, with a wonderful evening of music from the Great American Songbook. A very popular event, and we are looking forward to seeing Joyspring again in 2022.

In 2022, the diary is starting to look a little more like it used to in pre-pandemic days although there is a long way to go!

Romy Hills

## **Woodbridge Deanery Synod**

Woodbridge Deanery Synod – 2021 Annual Report. Many of us met some amazing challenges throughout 2021 and Woodbridge Deanery Synod was not exempt from these. February: The first meeting of newly elected synod members had to take place on Zoom. A brief meeting to introduce people to one another and to catch up with the work of our Diocesan and General Synods, it was well attended and worked surprisingly well. Mary Hare was re-elected as Lay Chair and Linda Cooper as our Deanery Synod secretary. Clive Willets agreed to continue to serve as Deanery Organiser. Thanks were recorded by synod for the work of Heather Marshall who had served as secretary and a thank you card and flowers to express our appreciation were agreed. Sadly because of Lockdown the Climate Conference Day planned for May had to be cancelled. The new Rector of Carlford Benefice, the Revd Katrina Dykes, was licensed via Zoom on Monday 10th May 2021. June: Once more on Zoom because of government restrictions! We warmly welcomed the Revd Katrina Dykes to her first meeting. Also welcomed were three visitors. Ben Wale - the Lightwave hub leader for our area - gave an update on Lightwave locally and encouraged us to be in touch for support to reach out to people outside the church. Working with parishes is a priority. Ben also told us of a planned confirmation group for young people preparing for a service in September. Canon Dave Gardner and the Revd Phil Dykes then led us through some thinking about how we begin to plan for mission in the future and how we might recover from the pandemic lockdowns. A useful tool was offered for PCCs to use. This thinking was in preparation for the planned October Deanery Synod workshop to be led by Dave and Phil, as we think about our Deanery Plan. October: We were able to meet face to face in Clopton Village Hall. Over coffee and cake, we began to get to know each other better and then worked on our priorities for supporting the parishes in the future. Many wonderful ideas were formed by the working groups and are being followed up by the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee. A week later we held a brief Zoom consultation meeting about Lightwave and Growing in God in the Countryside led by the Ven. Sally Gaze. The priorities for your Deanery Synod for 2022 are to be: Children and Young people, Growing Younger, the Environment and Eco Church, Vocations and training for Lay and Ordained Ministries. Please watch out for details and do join your elected representatives to hear quality speakers and to learn together about the support offered to the local church in these areas. THANK YOU: a huge thank you for your contributions to Parish Share this year, as a deanery we almost made our target, and this is truly wonderful after such a difficult year.

The Ven. Annette Cooper, Rural Dean

## Elders

Elders, whose role is partly pastoral and partly liturgical, carry out a variety of activities within the church and it can be hard to separate the role of an Elder from other duties – one Elder likened this to ‘ivy woven into a fence – if you try to separate them the whole lot comes down’!

The general consensus amongst the group of Elders is that they have spent the past year gradually picking up the threads again, following various interruptions due to Covid.

Visiting local Care Homes (Grove Court, Thurleston Lodge, Haughgate House, Seckford Care and Woodbridge Lodge) to administer Extended Communion, take Morning Prayer and lead services at Christmas and Easter has resumed, wherever possible, as have home visits to members of our congregation who are too unwell / infirm to attend church in person. The latter has recently been coordinated by a retired Elder who has become our ‘unofficial Elder Administrator’.

Members of the congregation who have been reluctant or unable to return to church in person have been able to access our recorded services online (instigated and professionally produced by one of the Elders who also enables them to join us in a way that is as fully appropriate as possible). Several Elders have kept in regular phone and email contact with those who might otherwise feel isolated at home or in sheltered accommodation. Elders have also ensured that the weekly Pew Sheet is delivered, either electronically or in person, to these individuals and also to each of the Care Homes listed above.

Since January our sister church of St. Mary’s, Great Bealings has been supported by Elders leading a monthly ‘Morning Prayer with Reflection’ in this beautiful church.

Weekly Saturday Morning Prayer has continued on Zoom and is led and regularly attended by some Elders plus a couple of other members of our congregation. This service has continued to be valuable enabling us to worship together regularly, keep in touch, support each other as well as keeping us up to date with the names of members of our congregation who need our prayers. For those who attend it has proved to be a lovely way to start the weekend.

Elders have been asked to welcome the congregation as they enter the church building at the start of services and, at the same time, to keep an eye out for new people and talk to and help them.

In addition to the above Elders have continued to prepare and lead the intercessions in Sunday services and are also on the rota to read the Lesson. Elders have taken Evening Prayer and Compline, and occasionally acted as Verger at funerals, while also supporting the Rector and the mission of St. Mary’s.

Alison Davis



## Epiphany Chapel

The Epiphany Chapel has continued to be closed throughout the 21/22 year. As an alternative to putting the flowers in the chapel it was suggested that they be put by the side of the statue of St. Mary the Virgin. The statue was brought out of the Epiphany Chapel and placed in the church during the year.

The rota was re-instated, but sadly the rota has lost a number of volunteers.

The people now volunteering are:

Sally Wade-Gery, Sarah Lines, Sue Leslie, Margaret Lowe, Hilary Megone, Jenny Harris, Jean Waller, Barbara Stear, Joan Watkins, Mary Hodge, Angela Underhill, Michael Stagg, Jane Cole, Marion Clarke, Anthea Lloyd Jarvis, Val Garrod, Judy Dowse, Susan Hubbard, Vi Woolmer, Margie Stagg, Gillian Bush, Sally Carr.

Sarah Lines

## Fabric Report

The last year has mainly been one of planning, inspection and general maintenance.

Bells – A new bell rope guide was installed to replace a split guide, many thanks to Isaac Young, who carried out this work.

CCTV – The CCTV was at the end of its useful life, with a number of issues continuing to come up, and a decision made to replace it with a modern system which would be more reliable and flexible, and well as provide better quality imaging.

Sound and Vision – Similar to the CCTV system the sound system slowly becoming less reliable and was replaced by a new sound and vision system with improved sound quality and the addition of a camera system, allowing services to be livestreamed over the internet greatly increasing the outreach and flexibility of the church.

A number of general maintenance works have been carried out including sash window repairs to SMH with scheduled further repairs in Summer 2022, as well as electrical and boiler works.

We have now formed a Fabric Committee, and I look forward to working with them on future projects and tasks.

Looking ahead it is the intention to tender a contractor to carry out the outstanding quinquennial works in 2022.

Simon Morris

## Flower Group

### Report for St Mary's Flower Group year 2021-2022

The summer of 2021 slowly gathered momentum with agreement that we should provide one pedestal for each Sunday service. Many of our members had retired due to advancing years and whereas pre-pandemic we would have teams of two providing two pedestals, the shortfall in numbers meant it was too difficult.

October brought Harvest Festival and for the first time in a while we had the full complement of members. We were thus able to provide a full number of harvest arrangements.

Christmas arrived soon afterwards and we were able to provide the usual greenery in time for the carol service and flowers for the Christmas day services.

It was a quiet year for weddings and funerals and we were not requested to provide flowers, thus diminishing the small profits we are able to make. The one funeral we did was sadly, Andy Todd's and Sue Todd made a generous contribution in thanks.

One of our old members, Mavis Proctor, left us £100 in her will. We have still not decided how to spend it.

It is a continuing disappointment that we have failed to recruit new members to the group and it is an underlying worry about what happens when all of us become too old and infirm to cope. A question perhaps for another day!

We end the year in profit and with Easter just passed. We are now in the throes of organising a flower festival for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee for which the PCC has generously donated £500.

Sue Smith-Lyte

## **The Friends of St. Mary's Church**

It's been a busy start to 2022 for the Friends of St Mary's and we're back to running regular events in church following the disruption of lockdown.

In 2022 the Friends celebrates its tenth anniversary having raised over £120,000 during this period. The North Porch, the repair of stained glass windows, specialist masonry work and an overhaul of the church bells have all been paid for with the help of a variety of events run by the Friends – not to mention an extremely generous legacy and the subs which get paid year after year by our loyal supporters.

Recent events include a well-attended Ipswich School Prom, a delightful concert by the Willows Quintet and another mellifluous journey through the greats of Broadway by the jazz combo *Joyspring*. Covid permitting, there is much more in the pipeline this year, including an art show at the beginning of July to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and what we hope will be a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary gathering in October (Watch this space!)

Nick Cottam

## **Girlguiding - 2<sup>nd</sup> Woodbridge (St Mary's) Rainbows**

This year has seen us return to the new normal with meetings happening weekly face to face (on the whole!) We have a unit of 11 girls with a waiting list for when girls reach the age they can join us which is now from 4 years old if the parents feel they will cope. We have yet to have a 4 year old join us.

We have achieved as a unit 3 skills builder badges from three of the six themes our programme focuses on, and the girls have been tackling some of the 12 Interest badges at home. I have had two girls achieve bronze, one silver and potentially have another silver and gold award which are near completion. All the girls engage well with our varied programme which has included a 'Be a Brownie' evening where we learnt about the next section, a Zoom session where we made Mug cakes, we made marble runs from foil trays and play doh, an international evening where the girls got to try on an Indian Saris. The girls undertook being Kind and Helpful at home to raise money to

fill a Smartie tube. Funds went to *Children in Need*. The girls also brought in Harvest items that were donated to the Church to pass on. The girls have also gained their Buzz about Anglia badge (Girlguiding Anglia were 50 years old and set us challenges throughout the year), an Alphabet badge where we did activities based on letters of the alphabet, origami was one, learning about leaves another, paper aeroplanes to fly to Scotland for St Andrews Day was great fun too.

Again, it has been a year where challenges have arisen, and we have risen to meet them head on. Lots of new skills have been learnt by the girls and the leaders. Most importantly we have had fun whilst doing so!

Sarah-Jane Gee

## **Girlguiding - 3<sup>rd</sup> Woodbridge (St Mary's) Rainbows**

Over the last year, Covid has had an effect on the Unit with restrictions still in place for most of 2021. At the start, the Unit was unable to meet face to face and it was decided not to hold virtual meetings due to the age group. Contact was maintained by emails with challenges and projects for the girls and several home visits for special events, such as Christmas and Easter. This meant that they could continue with the programme at home, if they wanted.

It was great at last to be able to meet in the B-P Room; the girls worked on their 'Have Adventures' Skills builder in the summer and took part in the wildlife and flowers challenge in the graveyard. They had fun finding various flowers in Elmhurst Park and discovering what the best playground equipment was at Melton children's park. They also had a brilliant visit organised by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and trying to detect bats at Foxburrow Farm.

In September, there were further challenges, with the increased rates of Covid in Suffolk, so that for most weeks we were missing at least one girl due to self-isolating. The girls found it very difficult to participate in group activities, as they had spent most of the year away from their peers. The unit had to re-think its activities such as introducing group games slowly. We are very grateful to the Church for allowing us to move downstairs into the small hall, which has made a difference to how we run our meetings. We had an interesting visit to the library and the girls learnt how to invent a character and create a small story out for it.

In the Spring Term the girls have worked on 'Express Myself' Skills builder, where they had fun learning about different materials, making puppets and having a go at some experiments, including one where they made lots of bubbles. All the girls have been working on interest badges at home. As a group they made a Rainbow mural which they presented to the Framfield Medical Centre in Woodbridge, where it now hangs proudly in the reception area.

We are now looking forward to more excitement in the forthcoming year.

Alison Lavender & Christal Champkin

## **Girlguiding - 3<sup>rd</sup> Woodbridge (St Mary's) Brownies**

3<sup>rd</sup> Woodbridge Brownies have continued to thrive during the last year, while the importance of groups for girls to be energetic, explorative and expressive has been even more appreciated and needed. We have met in person and 'on Zoom' as conditions have dictated.

The torchlight exploration of the churchyard was very popular. I saw the building and its surroundings in a different way as we shone torches on different features, and Brownies' curiosity of the meaning of inscriptions, carvings and placement of doors was sparked. The most

memorable moment was when the gaggle of 16 girls fell naturally silent to listen to the choir practising inside. The visit to *Clip and Climb* tested our courage, camaraderie and agility. Crafts, games and songs continue to be core parts of being a Brownie as they have always been.

We appreciate our facilities.

Carole Chamberlain

## **Girlguiding – 2<sup>nd</sup> Woodbridge (St Mary's) Guides**

We began 2021, as we had finished 2020, online via Zoom, but were delighted that, as the national laws and *Girlguiding* advice relaxed, in the spring we were able – with countless detailed risk assessments – to resume face-to-face meetings, albeit outside. The first such Monday evening was amazing, with inextinguishable smiles all round, particularly from girls and parents, but also from Leaders!

As the summer progressed, in addition to other more local and on-site activities, we were able to enjoy an evening in Rendlesham Forest, some outdoor cooking in idyllic surroundings in Pettistree and archery, grass sledging, making fires and cooking at Hallowtree.

Throughout the year, with supplements, our programme, based around *Skills builder* clauses and some *Unit Meeting Activities*, continued and some girls chose to tackle *Interest Badges*.

We managed one face-to-face meeting in the Hall in September, but – as Covid became more prevalent locally and particularly within the 10-14 age – were given permission to meet in church and have since done so very happily in the larger, airier space, so important with the (now twenty girls again) we have as members. Nevertheless, we supported *Children in Need* and had two stalls at the church's Christmas Market.

I continue to be grateful to Alison Lavender for sharing her experience and enthusiasm and, in a similar manner, should like to thank Meg Cooke, who joined us in the summer as a third Leader.

The Unit appreciates very much all of the ongoing support of the parish, which facilitates the work of the Leaders in providing worthwhile experiences for the girls.

Veronica Howe

## **Inside Out Parish Magazine**

We printed 3000 copies of the four issues of *Inside Out* in the past year. Each magazine builds on Fr Nigel's editorial and provides an update of church projects and news under 'Here & There'. Over the year we've had short articles about nature, the environment and climate change, Fairtrade, prison, prayer and pilgrimage.

The A5 format combined with a strikingly different cover colour and photo each quarter hopefully makes an inviting option in the wide range of free publications put through everyone's door, and provides a way for us to reach out and connect with the wider community by sharing news of some of the activities we are currently involved with or planning. The 4 page (8 sides) format was increased to 6 page (12 sides) from the December issue and we have an increasing number of advertisers. The newsletter is delivered to every home in the Parish, as well as local public buildings.

Rita James

## Junior Church - Children and Families

From the time of last year's written report, there have been activities provided for children at every Sunday Eucharist. As a result, we now have some regular attendance on Sundays from nine families. The ages of these children vary from 4 years to 10 and 11 years.

The parents of some of these families are now becoming more involved in helping with the children's activities.

The activities provided on Sundays are linked to the Gospel of the day and to the liturgical calendar of the year. The children make cards, posters, write prayers, discuss Gospel stories and values, and learn a little bit about the liturgy of the church.

In late summer, we had 15 children in the church grounds on a Saturday morning, joining in with the National Churches 'Count on Nature'. They and their parents were armed with magnifying glasses, charts and bug jars as they counted insects, birds, flowers, trees, bees and butterflies. The morning ended with the sharing of a lovely caterpillar cake!!

On Christmas Eve, all the Junior Church children dressed in Nativity costume and mimed the story in our Crib and Christingle Service. More than 50 Christingles were made by some of the children and their parents, and all were given out at the service, with a large number of families and children attending. We ended with a rousing session of the 'What's that star!' song!

Palm Sunday this year, was particularly special, with 7 children carrying handfuls of greenery, walking behind Orlando the donkey, in solemn procession to the church.

The children have led the intercession prayers in the Sunday service three times; at the Harvest Service where they also joined the choir in a harvest song; on Mothering Sunday and on Easter Sunday.

The children have received 'Bumble bee' badges (Thank you, David Berridge, for making them) and we take the title of Junior Church "B" club... always busy and spreading good things! We have a small notice board for displaying some of our work (Thank you again, David).

There is always something nice for the children to take home after all their activities, whether it be a balloon, a plant, a card to give, seeds to sow, a little cross to wear, a glass angel, or a chocolate munchmallow to eat!

In addition to Sunday activities, we offer Messy Church mornings approximately every 3 months. This, so far, has taken place on Sunday mornings from 11.15am and has ended with a shared lunch at 1pm. The uptake for Messy Church has been excellent, with an average of 15 children attending with a parent. The activities follow a theme linked with the liturgical calendar:

September Messy Church – Let's Save The Earth

December Messy Church - Treasures and Gifts

March Messy Church - Jump into Spring

April Holy Saturday - Eggs and Alleluias

The parents and some of our parishioners have formed a strong team for helping to organise the Messy activities and lovely shared lunches... and I would like to thank the members of the team: Rachel Mayes, Sarah Morris, Nicola Hopwood, Kirsten Berridge (and David), Valerie le Marchant, Barbara Stear, Michelle Bullard, Helena Lim-Poole, Caroline Hawksley, as well as the parents who always 'muck in' on the day! On a couple of Messy Church occasions, we have been lucky enough to have two or three teenagers who have run an activity, and we remain very much on the 'look out' for this age group to come along and get involved with what we are doing both in, and out of church.

Our biggest THANK YOU of course, goes to the children, who bring great joy to the parish.

Liz Prior

## **Meditation Group – St. Mary's**

The group has continued to meet every Tuesday at 5.15pm for meditation. We happily returned to meeting in person in St Mary's House when it became Covid-safe, with some members joining us on Zoom, making for a hybrid experience. This has worked surprisingly well with only the odd technical hitch! Each week a different member contributes a short introductory reading and then another member leads us into the time of silence with a focussing exercise. At the end there is time for gentle reflection, and we finish with the Grace. We find that meditating together gives us all encouragement and support. We are always delighted when new members come along. None of this is about being a 'good meditator', we are all agreed there is no such thing, but that all of us are learners.

Alison Davis and Caroline Hawksley

## **Maintenance, Fire and Health and Safety**

During February 2021, the gutters around the Church and St Mary's House were cleared of debris. Drains and gulleys around the Church were cleared of debris and flushed through. This work was carried out by contractors. No contractors have been employed for this work since.

I have inspected the Church gutters and SMH gutters between the buildings and so far they are relatively clear of debris. It is likely a contractor will be needed to carry out a thorough clean of gutters, rain gulley's and drains later in the year.

During September and October 2021 Veronica Howe and I cleared a good deal of unwanted items from the cellar in SMH which were disposed of at the Foxhall waste facility.

Fire extinguishers and fire blankets were inspected and serviced or replaced as necessary during February this year. A fire certificate has been issued. The fire alarm system within St. Mary's House has been checked and confirmed as working correctly.

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) was carried out during September 2021.

A major service was carried out on the Church boilers with a follow-up repair to a leaking water pipe valve in the Church. The boilers are ageing and their remaining life and subsequent replacement has been discussed a number of times, I believe. The boiler service was well overdue.

The Treasury alarm system was checked and serviced in April this year.

Minor maintenance tasks have been undertaken as and when reported, although not always promptly!

There are several major works or replacements urgently needing attention within SMH:

The electric shower unit and the door into the shower upstairs need replacing

Front outer doors are rotting and a poor fit. Probably replacement needed.

Emergency exit doors are difficult to open and close. Decaying woodwork is an issue. The crash bars which open the doors also need replacing as they appear beyond repair.

There are no Health and Safety issues to report as far as I am aware.

I would like to thank Veronica Howe for her unstinting help and guidance on a number of occasions. And my thanks to Simon Morris who has been a huge help and guide, particularly over the last twelve months or so.

Stephen Saunders

(Over the past few years Health & Safety has been taken care of mainly by the Fabric Group. Going forward we are very grateful to Michelle Bullard who has taken on this role).

## **Mother's Union**

2021 started with us, as a group, unable to meet up, from January to June no meetings were able to be held due to 'Covid' restrictions. Our February AGM had to be cancelled but happened later in the year (July). We then set our sights on March – 'Lent Service' – unfortunately that had to also be cancelled and the same for April/May/June.

From July onwards things started to settle down and we were able to have meetings with a slight shuffle around, wearing our masks/social distancing and lots of hand hygiene. For some, Zoom Meetings!! became something new in 2021, (but not everyone).

Mary Sumner Day was held in August at Bury, several members were able to attend and all commented on the lovely atmosphere during the service.

As a branch we were able to send our donations, to this service, accumulated during lockdown: Seaman's Hats / Various New-born Knitted items / Dementia Fiddle Muffs / Knitted Hearts (for those either in Hospital or Care Homes) / £60.00 in vouchers to 'Women's Refuge Appeal / Emergency Wash Bags for Ipswich Hospital / Sleepwear and Underwear for Ipswich Night Shelter / Toiletries and from those able to sew – Covid Face Coverings and Scrubs. To mention but a few!!

We may be small in number but when the appeal goes out the call is always taken up.

We take the time to remember those members we lost in 2021:

Marjorie Deacon / Millicent Grey / Beryl Hatelie and to those who had moved away and members who had lost someone they loved. Also, our thoughts are with Joy Shipton who became an 'Indoor Member' after moving to Jubilee House, Seckford.

May we remember them all in our prayers and thoughts with love and deep affection?

Rachel and I continue as joint branch leaders for the MU and look forward to 2022 and hopefully to hold a full programme of events and speakers and a long awaited 'Party' to celebrate what we have achieved and reflect on the past year.

We welcome everyone and anyone (men included) to our meetings and new members would be a bonus.

Give us a try – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month – 2:30pm in SMH.

Rachel Jolley / Jean Cobb

## **Open the Book Group**

Owing to continued restrictions, only one school visit has been possible during the last twelve months.

In March, the team were delighted to be asked to go into St. Mary's School, where five of us presented a costumed version of the story 'The Lost Coin'.

We were well received, and it was a joy to be able to re-commence our telling of Bible stories to the children.

It is hoped that more visits to more schools will take place in the near future.

Val English

## **Parish Lunch**

This event has not happened since Covid struck. If anyone feels able to resume the much-appreciated service (by which once a month largely those living alone and others almost confined to home, come into St Mary's House for a freshly-cooked two-course lunch), they are asked please to let Linda know, in the Benefice Office.

## **Readers and Intercessors**

At present we have around 40 Readers and thank all of those who have read this year, and for their willingness to swap with others on the rota as and when required. We are short of Intercessors, though, and would ask anyone interested to speak to Fr Nigel.

## **St. Mary's House**

As 2021 began, it was hoped that some of our regular hirers and users would be able to resume their pre-Covid patterns. Government guidance was followed and larger spaces were offered, to promote distancing and good ventilation.

By the end of the year, Poppy's Pantry, the Co-op Bereavement Group and the Doctors' Professional Development Group had resumed their services to others, while the Poetry Group and long-term Yoga Class were offering personal leisure activities again.

Junior Church, Choir, Mothers' Union and our two Rainbow Units, Brownie Pack and Guide Company, together with the Ranger Unit, were all meeting regularly, albeit some in the church itself, with occasional meetings of Flower Arrangers and Bell-ringers, plus 'coffee' after the Sunday 10 am. Some users were still largely online, but we welcomed hirers on an occasional basis and at least one of those looks set to continue into 2022.

Having adopted the Bookings role on a temporary basis, which lasted for more than a decade, I am delighted that it is to become the responsibility of the Benefice Secretary.

Veronica Howe

## **St. Mary's House Project**

In January 2021, a small group of people began to meet to respond to the need '*Hope Beyond the Coronavirus Pandemic*'. This would:

- Respond to the issues of loneliness and isolation for many in our community.
- Focus on growing community resilience and promoting mental and emotional health and wellbeing.
- Grow technological capability and resilience, particularly increasing digital capacity and provision, and supporting those without online access to get online through training and support.

On 8 March 2021, the St Mary's House Project Group was formed to take these ideas forward into the re-energising of the refurbishment of St Mary's House and more, including the 'undercroft' basement extension concept previously developed by the Building Strategy Group, in response



to earlier consultation with the congregation. The main requirements from the consultation were improved access and toilet facilities, community use and income generation and community support.

This year, the Group has:

- Refocussed and reworked the Statement of Need.
- Met with the church architect to minimise the impact of the proposed 'undercroft' on the historic churchyard and to re-work the solution to providing single level access to the church through the north porch.
- Hosted separate visits by Historic England and the DAC (Diocesan (Architectural) Advisory Committee) on the best approach to maintaining the historic feel of the churchyard. A favourable response was received – with the DAC suggesting that a more specialised, considerate and contemporary design may be required to achieve a successful planning outcome.
- Appointed new Architects, Freeland Rees Roberts, to re-envision the designs for the project. The inspecting architects remain in place for St Mary's Church. The first meeting with the project architects took place on 22 March 2022.
- Obtained an outline estimate of costs from Hyams Quantity Surveyors.
- Completed a 'Measured (Topographical) Survey' of St Mary's House, the Church and Churchyard/grounds, which will be of use for detailed design work.

The congregation was able to view the concept sketches from the first round of designs, as part of the AGM which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The revised drawings will also be shared. Overall, the aim of the next stage is to obtain planning permission, whilst building support and interest in the local community.

Diane Milan

## **Servers**

The Servers of the Sanctuary have increasingly resumed their normal duties as our services have resumed from the challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Sadly, a few of our long-standing members decided to leave in 2020, and we have been unable to replace them. More volunteers would be very welcome!

The servers have enjoyed a number of "full-team" services over the last year, and it has been wonderful to once-again work together as team for Parish Communion services.

Despite our reduced numbers on some Sundays, we continue to be responsible for ensuring a service runs smoothly by carrying out a variety of duties, including preparing the sanctuary and altar table for the service, ensuring there are enough communion wafers available and checking that the cruets hold sufficient water and wine. This is in addition to our more visible roles of carrying the cross, incense, candles, and holding the bible for the Gospel readings, as well as receiving the gifts and generally assisting the rector during the service. After the service, we are usually around long after everyone has left, as we clear the altar and wash the chalices so that they are ready for further use. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the servers for their time, commitment and enthusiasm, and look forward to growing and developing the team as we move forward.

## Sidesmen

As the year progressed, and previous restrictions were lifted, it was good to be able to hand out hymn books again and to allow the congregation to sit where they wished.

Some of those who felt that they could not help last year have returned to their duties. For this we are so very grateful. Others felt that their days of assisting had come to an end: we thank them for their help over the years. Some are with us no longer.

However, we do have some new people on the rota and we are delighted to welcome them as they enjoy their new responsibilities.

There are currently 22 people helping on a permanent basis, with a further 6 as reserves. This is a notable reduction from the 30 we had on the rota 2 years ago, plus 8 reserves.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, the list of those available to help is as follows:

Jean Cobb

Stephen & Jane Cole

Geoff & Val English

Margaret Harper

Anna Jenkins

Janet Laight

Valerie Le Marchand

Sarah Lines

Rachel Mayes

Susan Morton

Andrew & Katherine Pickthorn

Steve & Saunders

Sandra Schur

Jamie and Lucy Symons

Katharine Turner

Stuart Wade

James & Violet Woolmer

Reserves:

Michelle Bullard

Roger Burgess

Stephen Lines

Freddie Pickthorn

Margy Saunders

Gerry Toplis

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Val English

## Social Events

While the pandemic knocked out what would in all probability have been a wide range of activities, our Patronal Festival was celebrated on the Feast of the Assumption and that was the day not only for the first **bring and share lunch** for over eighteen months, but also our **Summer Fair**, which – bathed in sunshine - proved popular with parishioners, townsfolk and visitors alike.

On what seemed the wettest evening of the year, we held the very first **Benefice Christmas Market** in St Mary's, Woodbridge. Despite the weather, there was good support and it provided a worthy blueprint for future such events. We have received several invitations to join our friends at St Mary's, Bealings and it is hoped that reciprocal and joint events will become part of our corporate life.

The new **'Open Doors' Coffee** (10 am -12 noon on the final Thursday in each month) piloted in the Autumn, is set to become a regular event in 2022 and may well be extended. It is hoped to

resume alternate Tuesday early morning **coffee/tea sessions for parents at St. Mary's Primary School**, while coffee continues for the **8 am** congregation on 'second Sundays' and for those at **10 am** on all but 1<sup>st</sup> Sundays.

All events planned so far for 2022 may be found in the Calendar, published earlier in the year.

Thanks are due to those, who faithfully maintain their place on rotas, and others who bring our events to fruition. More volunteers are always welcome!

Veronica Howe

## Stewards

Thanks to a valiant team of volunteers, our popular practice of having the church 'staffed' (from Easter to September) resumed after lockdown and continued in 2021.

The commitment involves one session (10.30 -12.30 or 2.00 – 4.00), or more if wished and just maintaining a friendly, but unobtrusive presence for visitors. The rota is established on a monthly basis to accommodate individual availability.

More Stewards would be very welcome and indeed are *needed* to maintain the service. Names could be offered to a Churchwarden or left with Linda, the Benefice Secretary, so that contact may be made.

Veronica Howe

## Time to Reflect Group

Time to Reflect continued its activities while adapting to the pandemic. The group was able to break new ground by contributing strongly to the climate change debate.

The Time to Reflect discussion group continued over Zoom.

- The first book of the year was 'Borders and Belonging: The Book of Ruth' by Pádraig Ó Tuama and Glenn Jordan which resonated strongly with issues of migration and the stranger.
- The next book was 'The Earth is the Lord's: a Biblical Response to Environmental Issues' chosen to provide a scriptural basis for our response to climate change issues in the context of COP26.
- The book chosen for the Spring term was 'Creating a Life with God: the call of ancient prayer practices' by Daniel Wolpert which has involved us trying out for ourselves a different prayer practice each week such as the Jesus Prayer and the Ignatius method, with the idea that one will become a new part of our prayer life.
- Two social events have enabled us to meet up face to face, which has been lovely.

A parish Quiet Day took place on 29th September in Brandeston Village Hall, followed by Eucharist in Brandeston Church just over the fields. The day was facilitated by Helen Randall, who took her theme from 'Little Gidding' "We shall not cease from exploration" about revisiting our spirituality in the light of Covid. About 25 people attended and enjoyed walking in the sunshine in the times for reflection.

Climate Change was addressed by five evening sessions held in the Shire Hall in October and November. The sessions, open to the whole of Woodbridge, were based around films by Tearfund and attracted a good group. Time to Reflect helped to organise the Climate Change Day of Action on 6<sup>th</sup> November, which primarily involved a march of about 250 people going from Whisstocks to the Town Hall and attracted the attention of *Look East*. This year three evening events have been held with a focus around action 'What can we do?' Members of the group will

be contributing to the Council's two days Woodbridge Climate Action event in the Community Hall at the beginning of April.

Time to Reflect is preparing ideas for this year's Quiet Day in liaison with the Rector.

**For further information please visit our website: [www.stmaryswoodbridge.org](http://www.stmaryswoodbridge.org)**

**Or contact: St. Mary's Benefice Office, 11 Market Hill, Woodbridge, IP12 4LP**

**[Parish.office@stmaryswoodbridge.org](mailto:Parish.office@stmaryswoodbridge.org)      01394 388820**