



**St Mary's Church Shaw cum Donnington  
Reports Document**

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025**

# Agendas

## Vestry meeting agenda

1. Vestry Meeting
- 1.1 Minutes of 2024 Vestry Meeting
- 1.2 Election of Wardens – any more nominations?

## APCM Agenda

0. Opening Prayer
1. Apologies for absence:
2. Minutes of the 2024 APCM
3. Fabric Report (RS)
4. Financial Statements (RH)
5. Health and Safety (SB)
6. Safeguarding report (SJ)
7. Electoral Roll (DH)
8. Deanery & CTNA Reports (LG) [Reps next elected 2026]
9. Committees and other Reports
- 9.1 Finance & General Purposes Committee (MS)
- 9.2 Ministry Subcommittee (RO)
- 9.3 Pastoral Team (MD)
- 9.4 World Partners (LG)
- 9.5 Churchyard (LG)
10. Rector's Report
11. Election of members to PCC – other nominations.
12. Time for open questions
13. Date of APCM next year
  - Proposal: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of March

# Minutes of Annual Parochial Church Meeting

## Sunday 17th March 2024

### 1. Vestry Meeting

#### 1.1 Minutes of 2023 Vestry Meeting:

Election of Wardens. Mark Hutson and Mary Dawkins have reached their retirement as Churchwardens and Raymond thanked the wardens for their seven + years of service. Mary and Mark did short presentations summing up what they had achieved during their service.

Ros Stuart was duly elected as our new warden and there remains one vacancy. Mark Hutson proposed Ros and Sally Breach seconded. She received a unanimous show of hands and applause. Raymond quoted Eph:6 and prayed for Mary, Mark and Ros.

1.2 Election of Wardens – Ros Stuart agreed to stand again and was re-nominated. There were no more nominations but we do need another warden. Raymond nominated Ros and she was duly re-elected.

1. Apologies for absence: Jane Obin, Nick Breach, Angie Mackoon, Heather White, Nicky Murnagh
2. Mary Dawkins Opened the meeting with a prayer and our prayers for those we have lost this year.

2. Minutes of the 2023 APCM: In MRB. There were three typo corrections to the minutes, and these were made before printing the MRB. Namely, Charles and Lesley Garner are Covenant Secretaries, and 28 people attended last year, and Mary Dawkins retired as Churchwarden, not Mary Hutson.

3. Fabric Report (RS) in MRB Tony Dawkins was added to the report for our thanks for all his hard work in the churchyard.

4. Financial Statement (RH) in MRB Rachel thanked Davis Cobbett for once again acting as our independent examiner and asked for him to be approved again. Rachel

5. Health and Safety (SB) in MRB A fire drill was asked about and Sally explained the H& S issues with the less able persons in the congregation if rushed. This is something being discussed.

6. Safeguarding report (SJ) in MRB. Report accepted and Steve thanked for all his hard work.

7. Electoral Roll (DH) in MRB. A complete list is always available in church.

8. Deanery & CTNA Reports (LG) in MRB. Reports accepted and no questions.

9. Committees and other Reports

9.1 Finance & General Purposes Committee (MS) in MRB. Report accepted with no questions.

9.2 Ministry Subcommittee (RO) in MRB. Mary Dawkins should be in the list of names already on the committee.

9.3 Pastoral Team (MD) in MRB. Report accepted with no questions.

9.4 World Partners (LG) in MRB. Some of the report went missing from the draft booklet somehow so Libby continued after 'Fairtrade fortnight' in the MRB.

Wendy asked for confirmation all the internal LED lighting is now done.

Yes. Committee asked to enquire about plans for the outside lighting.

Agreed.

Ros asked re Jones Bequest used for lighting. Jones Bequest and Phylis Newson's legacy were used to pay for them. Mary Dawkins asked if the church porches are lit with LED's. Yes.

10. Rector's Report. Raymond thinks we are essentially in good heart with all things St Mary's Shaw. We use our tagline "Knowing Jesus, Sharing God's love, Caring for People" in our worship and in our planning. We are back in the care homes post Covid and Ed is leading this valuable ministry. We have spent our Sundays working though focussed books and epistles and We had an away day discussing 'how can I help' and those replies on cards are being discussed. We are back in the schools too, and COINS is back doing their valuable ministry with our help too. ED was thanked for his valuable ministry and for his wisdom and knowledge. Former wardens Mark and Mary were thanked for their continued ministry roles. Ros was thanked for her role as Churchwarden and her tireless efforts to keep everything in order. Sally was thanked for her long service as Parish Administrator and ministers' PA now she is retired, and for her continued role as PCC Secretary. Shoemakers had a 20 year anniversary service here yesterday. George asked if we could deliver easter leaflets like we do the Christmas ones. Raymond has printed 2000, 900 of which will go out with the Parish Newsletter. Wendy offered to coordinate this. Agreed. Barbara asked if we could do a banner for the churchyard. Pending. A new noticeboard is also being discussed.

11. Election of members to PCC – other nominations.

· 3 vacancies on 3-year cycle Rachel Haslam, Steven Joplin, Gill Moore all re-elected and Raymond thanked them for continuing in their roles.

Election of Stewards: (List in MRB) All re-elected, and George Cummings and Lesley Almond were also added. Steven Joplin asked to come off as it's too complicated for him as a carer and AV operator.

12. Time for open questions. Ros offered a vote of thanks to Raymond and Ed for their leadership and for all they have taught us in 2023.

George asked if there are plans for a higher profile in the public space.

Raymond asked for someone to take publicity on. There is a lot we need to do, and it was suggested we may approach outside sources to help us.

The Christianity Explored course was talked about at church today. It will be five weeks in Mark's gospel with Ed. A video, talk, discussion and prayer.

Invite friends and maybe come with them. George asked if pupils for Trinity could come. Yes, with written parental permission through SJ. Wendy

asked anyone willing to deliver easter leaflets to see her today. Judith

asked for inclusion for Barnabas, Lunch Club and Mrytle.

Church centre windows update: Diocese deciding on our faculty then we can go ahead.

Have we applied for the grant on the audit as it must be done. Grant was applied for but refused as we must get faculty first.

Church logbook and Terrier were made available for view.

Readers needed for Good Friday. There is sign-up sheet on the welcome table.

13. Date of APCM next year

· Proposal: Sunday 23rd March 2025 (3rd Sunday in Lent)

Meeting finished with prayer and the Grace at 12.30pm

# Reports for APCM 2025

## 3. Fabric report

As usual all the routine maintenance and servicing was done during 2024 including the boilers in the Church and Church centre, the door alarm, fire extinguishers, lightening protection, organ and piano tuning, and also in 2024, PAT testing of all our portable electrical items.

We have had the gutters and downpipes cleared twice, as recommended by the Diocese, and in May work was done on the roofs as advised in our quinquennial inspection. We will now concentrate on some of the quinquennial work that we are able to do ourselves, or with local tradespeople for relatively small cost leaving the more expensive jobs of dressing stonework, painting downpipes and decorating the inside of the Church for the time being.

During 2024, following the granting of a faculty, three of the windows in the Church centre (the ones from the original building) were replaced. The vestry was re-arranged and redecorated in time for our new Administrator Maggie's, arrival in September. We still have to clean the carpet, and also still need to redecorate the kitchen and the youth lounge and clean the Church centre carpets.

The upgrade to our CCTV system started in December 2023 was completed early in 2024. However, we then realised that we should have applied for a faculty, or at least the Archdeacon's permission for that work. We applied for a retrospective faculty and have now received that.

We have also been granted a faculty to fit handrails to the Lychgate but there has been a delay in getting this work done. We hope it will be completed before too long.

And we have been granted a faculty to replace the internal South door with a glass door set in an oak timber frame. The door is in the process of being built, and should be ready to be fitted by the end of March.

In the Churchyard trees were trimmed by West Berks Council (as the Churchyard is closed responsibility for maintenance falls to WBC). Attention has also been drawn to the Lychgate which is in need of repair, and the wall which is the boundary of the Churchyard onto the road which has lost many flints. This is also the responsibility of WBC and we have been in contact with them about this.

As always there are a great number of people who help in many ways with the upkeep of our Grade II listed Church building, especially Nick Breach, Raymond, Mike Stuart, Tony Dawkins. Also thanks to Derek, the flower club, brass cleaners, Church cleaners, and everyone who helps to keep St. Mary's looking so welcoming and cared for.

Ros Stuart

#### **4. Financial Statements**

*This report is accompanied by the separate financial statements*

St Mary's, Shaw-cum-Donnington Financial Review 2024

The financial accounts for 2024 are set out in their required form on the following pages, and comprise the following documents:

**Receipts and Payments Account Summary**

**Receipts and Payments Details**

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities as of 31st December 2024.**

**Independent Examiners Report which has been signed by David Cobbett following his review and comparison of the PCC's accounting records with the financial statements.**

These reports were reviewed by the PCC on 25th February 2025.

**Receipts and Payments Accounts**

**Receipts**

**Voluntary Income**

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £37,933. Restricted donations (money collected for Cancer Care Calendars and Link to Hope Shoeboxes) of £412 were also received. Voluntary donations have increased by almost £5,000 this year.

*Activities for generating funds:*

The 200 Club raised £1,925 for general funds. Other fundraising events included a Burns Night Supper, Easter, Harvest and Christmas Teas organised by the Pastoral Team, a slide show, a classical concert and an organ recital. £2,068 was donated via The Good Exchange and a further £2,500 was received from Greenham Trust in 2024 towards the refit of the church kitchen. Total fundraising income was £10,928.

*Income from investments*

The income from the Jones Will Trust was £12,500.

The freehold house in Walton Way continues to be let and provided an income of £8,357 after management fees and repairs were taken into account.

#### *Income from church activities*

Service fee income has increased slightly due to more funerals taking place in 2024 compared to the previous year.

#### *Other Income*

Other income was £5,462. The main items were VAT refunds of £2,084 (church lighting, CCTV and kitchen refit), Lunch Club donations, Myrtle Café donations and tickets to Waterperry Gardens for a church outing.

#### *Total Income*

Income for the year was £93,878. This has increased since 2023 due to the increases in voluntary income, fundraising, investment income and income from church activities.

#### *Payments*

The Costs of Events in 2024 was £5,787 and included prizes for the 200 Club, Lunch Club and Burns Night expenses and the coach trip to Waterperry Gardens. It also the fee of £2,000 paid to the classical concert performers. This fee was funded by an individual sponsor.

Charitable Donations in 2024 were £804 and included money collected for Cancer Care Calendars, Link to Hope Shoeboxes (£412) plus donations to CAP (£100), ECO Church (£125), Bible Society (£73.34), West Berkshire Foodbank (£77) and Next Gen Youth Café (£17).

Funds were also raised for special collections and events and these were paid to the charities directly so do not appear in the accounts. These are:

1. Tearfund Big Quiz (£176),
2. Christmas Collections for ATE and Jesus Disciple Centre (£462)
3. Christingle Collection for Jesus Disciple Centre (£82).

Total Charitable donations were £1,614.

Of the Christmas money donated to ATE, £152 was added to the 'Big Give' fund in order to receive matched funding. A further £90 was added to the 'Big Give' for ATE by individuals.

£68,107 was spent from unrestricted funds, and a further £384 from restricted funds, on church running costs in 2024. The major item of expenditure was St Mary's Parish Share contribution to the Oxford Diocese of £23,789.

This amount is approximately 56% of the Parish Share paid by similar parishes as Raymond is a self-supporting minister.



£3,300 was spent from the £50,000 legacy fund on enhancements to the church and church centre. The items approved by PCC and then purchased were the CCTV and church centre lighting upgrades. Other items of capital expenditure were the deposit for the lychgate handrails, repairs to the church roof and new windows for the church centre. As a result, the 'Building Maintenance' and 'Church Centre' restricted funds have now been totally spent.

### *Net Result*

Total payments for 2024 were £97,131 compared to receipts of £93,838 giving a deficit of £3,293. The planned expenditure on capital projects was the main reasons for the deficit. The numbers of people attending services in 2024 continued to increase and it is hoped that this will result in an increase in voluntary income in 2025. In addition, the PCC will continue to explore where savings can be made in order to ensure that St Mary's remains financially viable and is able to continue its commitments to the congregations and the community. St Mary's has an aspiration to return to paying the full Parish Share within the next few years in order to support a full-time member of the clergy in the future.

It is planned to spend some of the remaining legacy funds on replacing the Internal South Doors. Other proposals for use of the legacy funds are still under discussion. Cash funds at the end of 2024 were £86,171 split between a business current account and three savings accounts.

This includes the sum of £2,666 held in the Youth Work Restricted Reserve Fund, £181 in the Lunch Club Fund and £1,231 in the Pastoral Team fund. The total amount in the restricted reserve funds at the end of the year was £4,078. This represents money that was raised for a specific purpose and can only be spent on those items.

### *Reserves Policy*

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds which equates to at least three months unrestricted payments. This is equivalent to £30,000. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. The total amount in the unrestricted reserve fund at the end of 2024 was £66,230.

### *Conclusion*

I would like to thank everyone who continues to support St Mary's financially by their regular giving and support of special projects. Thank you to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for their close monitoring of the finances and church property. I anticipate that the

church reserves will further decrease in 2025 due to planned investment in the church fabric and repairs arising from the quinquennial inspection. I would like to thank Tony Bradford for maintaining the day-to-day financial records. Thank you to Steve Joplin for all his work in recording cash and envelope donations. Thank you to Charles and Lesley Garner for acting as our Gift Aid Administrators for many years and to Heather White who has recently taken over this role. Thank you to David Cobbett for kindly acting as our Independent Examiner again this year.

Rachel Haslam,  
Treasurer, St Marys Shaw cum Donnington. January 2025

## **5. Health & Safety Report**

2024 was another very busy year in the life of St Mary's, with many thousands of people coming into our Church and Church Centre over the last 12 months. We must make sure we maintain a safe environment as well as a welcoming one.

1. There have been further instances of fire escape routes in the Church Centre being blocked, but since a sign was placed next to the rear door things have improved in this area.
2. Work has continued to remove clutter/rubbish from the upstairs room in the Church Centre and is now looking much improved. However, there is still much needed work to be done with the balcony area and the middle bell chamber.
3. During the year a suggestion was made to use the Church Centre for an emergency location to house homeless people overnight. Before this can happen, a Fire Risk Assessment is required to be completed in compliance with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Fire Risk Assessment will identify the improvements required for the safety of people sleeping in the building overnight. Currently the Church Centre is clearly non-compliant.
4. The Church car park has been greatly improved by the installation of LED lighting and the clearing of overgrown vegetation. However, the speed and behaviour of drivers dropping off and collecting pupils from Trinity School in the car park leaves much to be desired.

As always remember, Don't Walk By - Health & Safety is everybody's responsibility. If you see something wrong or unsafe, please either put it right yourself or report it to the appropriate person.

Nick Breach  
Health & Safety Focal Point

## **6. Safeguarding Report**

I firstly want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the appalling safeguarding cases that have been reported over the last few months in the national news. This has raised no doubt many questions and emotions in all of us. One of the comments that has sat with me for a while is “not marking our own homework”. Inevitably there will be change as the Church reflects, I hope the result will be an outward looking approach, with the thoughts and feelings of the survivors of abuse held at the front and centre of any future plans.

I receive regular email updates from the Head of Safeguarding for the Oxford Diocese and the communications have been very thoughtful, insightful, encouraging and also positively re-enforcing the many cases of good practice across the Diocese.

Safeguarding at St Mary's continues to be an agenda item at each PCC, this allows a slot to discuss and have open conversations. The Safeguarding Policy was also reviewed and approved at our PCC meeting in September. One of our values printed on the pew sheets each week is “Caring for People”, safeguarding plays a role in promoting how we look after and care for those we support across a wide variety of groups and activities that take place throughout the week.

Over the last year we have welcomed The Boys Brigade. I have had regular emails and discussions with Roger to ensure that Safeguarding is on the agenda, and is tailored to how they operate. I look forward to continuing this positive relationship over the next year.

The safeguarding log which records training and DBS certificates is in good shape. Both the training courses and DBS certificates are valid for 3 years. If you do have training due over the coming months, please do get yourself booked onto the relevant training and we will be in touch where DBS's are due. If anyone is having any difficulties getting onto the training please don't hesitate to contact me.

Lastly thank you to all those who have done their training and DBS's over the last year and also emailed me any copies of certificates.

Kindest Regards

Steven Joplin

Parish Safeguarding Officer

St Mary's Shaw-cum-Donnington

## **7. Electoral Roll Report**

The ER Officer will give the report at the APCM

## **8. Deanery and CTNA reports**

*Written report not received at the time of going to press.*

## **9. Committees and other reports**

### **9.1 FGP Report**

The remit of the F&GP committee covers a wide range of issues including all matters of finance, health and safety questions, maintenance and upkeep of the Church and Church centre, employment and salaries and the management of the Church-owned house in Walton Way. The members of the committee in 2024 were: Mike Stuart (Chair), Raymond Obin (Rector), Ed Yates (Curate), Rachel Haslam (Treasurer), Ros Stuart (Church Warden), David Wilson and Nick Breach. Former Church Wardens Mark Hutson and Mary Dawkins were both invited to continue attending if they so wished. Sally acted as Clerk to the committee and took the minutes for which we were extremely grateful. Nick Breach has the role of Health and Safety Officer. Tony Bradford is assistant treasurer and Charles and Lesley Garner acted as joint Gift Aid secretary, making regular claims for the church. David Cobbett again acted as Independent Examiner of our Accounts for 2024.

Many of the issues dealt with by the committee during 2024 are covered by the Financial and Fabric reports so the following represents just a brief overview of items discussed and actions taken.

Roof repairs, as highlighted by the 2023 Quinquennial inspection, were carried out in May.

The three oldest windows in the church centre were replaced with new, more efficient, custom built double glazed units.

All remaining unconverted lights in the church and church centre were replaced with new LED units.

The youth lounge was subjected to a major clear out of accumulated items and is now considerably tidier and a more usable space for groups like the Boy's Brigade.

The project to replace the inner south door with a new glass one was still ongoing, but a final design and manufacturer was chosen and faculty applied for.

It is planned to install handrails near the door between the office corridor and the church to assist with negotiating the steps.

A new higher resolution CCTV system was installed in February and a retrospective faculty applied for.

In the churchyard, the council arranged for the Yew trees to be pruned where they were growing over the path to the war memorial and obstructing the gate. All tree branches overhanging the fire escape from the church centre youth lounge were also cleared.

We received a faculty to install railings on the steps in the lych gate but unfortunately delays in manufacture mean that we are still waiting for them.

Our tenant at 125 Walton Way is continuing to look after the property well and rental payments have been paid on time. Minor repairs were made to the garden shed, including a new window.

Rachel Haslam continues in her role as a Trustee for the Frances Jones Trust, for which the committee is very grateful.

To finish, I would like to thank all who have served on the Finance committee this year for their hard work, help and advice.

Mike Stuart

## **9.2 Ministry Sub Committee Report**

The Ministry Team met 5 times in 2024.

Meetings review events that are recently passed to see if there are good things to do again and other things we can learn to do things better.

Meeting also look forward to what is coming up to decide times and events, and also to coordinate who is responsible for various aspects of the ministry.

The team supports the Rector and Curate in planning and producing the worship of the church through year, including Sunday services, additional services we put on for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday,

Bereavement, and the annual events of Harvest, Remembrance, Carols, and other events and children's events that take place. It overlaps with the work of the Pastoral Team with regard to Home Members and Care Home ministry, with the leaders of all these teams present.

### **9.3 Pastoral Team report**

*Lord, give each member of our pastoral staff a servant heart and a caring spirit for the whole body of Christ. May we continue to grow in grace and show forth in our lives and homes a genuine love for those to whom we minister and a deep love for the Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen*

The Team Lesley Almond, Mark Hutson, Wendy Seamons, Chris Willetts, Karen Fenwick (Willows Edge) and Mary Dawkins supported by Rev. Raymond Obin and Rev. Ed Yates

We began 2024 bringing the Barnabas Bereavement Group under the Pastoral Team umbrella as Raymond invited Mary Dawkins to co-lead following Barbara Teale's retirement. Prepared posies, once again delighted recipients on Mothering Sunday.

Indoor Members, together with invited Barnabas Members met for a Maundy Thursday Easter Holy Communion Service, led by Rev Raymond Obin, in the Church Centre. Andy Grace played the piano. The Service was followed by a Seasonal Tea with Hot Cross Buns, Easter Biscuits and Eggs. Similar numbers attended the Service and Summer Tea in July. In October our guests enjoyed viewing the gifts and floral arrangements in Church following a delicious Harvest Lunch and service of Harvest Holy Communion where once again we were musically supported by Andy Grace.

Although we bid a fond goodbye to Joan Cooper and Pat Troughton we continued to invite 50 plus individuals to our social gatherings. We worked with the clergy supporting the Annual Bereavement Service at the end of October and many guests joined us for tea and a chat in the Church Centre. Lunch Club extended a warm welcome to several bereaved parishioners as a follow up from this service.

December is always a hectic time but we enjoyed a Christmas Communion with Carols followed by tea. It was a great joy to welcome Andy Grace again to play for the Barnabas Christmas Carol morning. Members supported the annual Christingle service for our young visitors and purchased 70 books for toddlers and primary aged children distributed at the end of worship. We recorded our thanks to Tesco plc for their generous donation of 60 oranges.

Rev. Ed Yates continued to lead worship with Communion Services at BUPA Donnington, Winchcombe, Newbury Grove, Birchwood and Willows Edge. Wendy, Judith, Mary, Mark and Karen supported Raymond and Ed at these popular and well supported monthly services.

We recorded our thanks for the matched funding we received from Vodafone and supported transport costs for the Parish trip to Waterperry Gardens.

Like many other groups we have engaged with Safeguarding and DBS training and policies. Following Ed's discussions with Phil Cook at the Oxford Diocese office several Pastoral Team members volunteered for training for lay members to undertake communion services at our nursing homes. With clergy support and encouragement, we will continue to update and upskill ourselves for this important role in the life and work of St Mary's.

This year Paul Seles was approached by Mary Dawkins and now drives the bus for monthly Lunch Club meetings. This was an answer to prayer and a great joy to those who travel with him. However, transport continues to be a difficulty for the elderly and the Pastoral Team would welcome any further stewardship offers of help be it weekly, monthly or occasionally.

Mary Dawkins  
Chair

## 9.4 World Partners report

The World Partners Committee develops our links with the world in pursuit of justice. Our vision is this; *in response to God's love for the world, the World Partners Committee aims to promote awareness and engage prayerful support in the church for a range of chosen charities and enable our church, as God's steward, to alleviate need and support justice in the world beyond St Mary's, including our environmental responsibilities.* The members of the committee for 2024 were Barbara Bradford, Ros Stuart, Gill Moore, Julie Cobbett and myself. As a church we support chosen local and world charities by raising money and awareness, and by prayer. We usually act as catalysts rather than making direct donations from church funds, with retiring collections, fundraising, speakers, joining in local events, volunteering, collecting goods etc.

Our main chosen charities for 2024 were **Christian Aid, Action Through Enterprise (in Ghana) and The Bible Society.** We have also supported Newbury CAP (Christians Against Poverty) debt assistance project. Volunteers have assisted local homeless charities and we collected stamps for RNIB and postcards for the Leprosy Mission as well as

patronising their catalogue. We supported the West Berks Food Bank and Women's Refuge. We hosted sessions of the COINS Christmas events.

**ATE** - Christmas collections and screen messages produced £321.15. (Of this £242 was put on the ATE Big Give in December and thus doubled.) Sarah Annable-Gardner spoke as compellingly as ever at after-church cafe on 1 December.

**Christian Aid:** We held an Easter Christian Aid collection in church over 3 Sundays for their Emergency Fund for forgotten crises, which raised £133 plus any online donations. Christian Aid Week went well, with "delivery only" envelopes and donations in church raising £501, of which £312 was gift-aided. A plant and a cake sale raised a further £282.70. £135 (mostly gift-aided) was raised for the Christian Aid Harvest Appeal. Several of us from St Mary's joined in the Christian Aid town centre collection on 14 September, which raised £311.07. Volunteers also took part in Newbury Christian Aid collections at Pinchington Lane Retail Park and baked, gave goods and assisted at a St Nic's coffee morning.

**Bible Society:** Bible Sunday on 27 October featured the work of The Bible Society (one of our core charities) in Remote Action and on the screen. £73.34 (10%) from a concert by Steve Bowey was sent to them.

**Tearfund** Big Quiz raised £176 in November.

**Fairtrade:** A "Big Brew" event with cake and a quiz in aid of Transform Trade, formerly Traidcraft, was held on 4 February at church cafe.

**West Berks Foodbank:** Goods were collected all year including 2 shopping trolley loads at Harvest from church and schools and extra Christmas fare.

**Link to Hope Shoe Box Appeal:** we collected 80 shoeboxes, plus some loose items and knitted items, from St Mary's and the community in November. Some people also did online boxes.

**Next Gen Cafe** (run by Jesus Disciple Centre at Riverside) was our other Christmas charity and £313.03 was raised for this work by screen messages and collections, including the Christingle Service collection of £81.88.

**Environmental:** We received our Eco Church Silver Award on 15 June. A donation of £125 was made to Eco Church, of which £88.30 was raised by retiring collections in church on 9 and 30 June. I wrote to Newbury Weekly News and the letter was published on 1 August. The church centre is now fully double-glazed following the installation of the three replacement



windows on the ground floor at the end of July. "Save energy" light switch stickers have been put on light switches throughout the church centre. Church, church centre and outside lights are now all LED. An insect hotel and a hedgehog box were added to the churchyard. We reviewed the 8 year plan to achieve net zero at the beginning of July, and were ahead in our targets. We promoted Earth Hour and the Big Garden Bird Watch. Green Tips in the pew sheet and Remote Action continued.

We held our annual Environment Service on Sunday 9 June. The theme of the service was "God's Gardeners", focussing on the dual responsibility of Christians to look after Creation and cultivate God's Kingdom and highlighting what we have done to improve our environmental effectiveness. This was followed by a species count in the churchyard for the national "Churches' Count on Nature".

I would like to thank the members of the World Partners Committee for their enthusiasm and dedication and all of you for your support.

Libby Goldsack

## **9.5 Churchyard Report**

The churchyard ended the year in pleasing shape. After an early hiatus, due to weather, lack of internal communications in WBC and bereavement leave, grass cutting got back on track with some care being taken by the contractors to get it right. The final cut of the year was done on 5/6 November ready for Remembrance Sunday. Roger Snelling, cleaned all the war graves for the occasion. The regular gardeners (a team of 6 of us) steadily continued to make an impact on tidiness and development of borders throughout the year and we were given more bulbs for planting. February and March saw the fruits of the bulb planting in October 2023, and this autumn Paul Bryant cleared and planted with spring bulbs the area immediately outside the south-east entrance to the churchyard. The planned tree trimming work (yews leading to war memorial, yews at south east path, overhanging trees on Trinity boundary behind church centre) took place in September and was well done, conservatively, by the WBC tree contractor and reclaimed the only easy disabled access via the small gateway and path to the War Memorial. Although litter tends to increase during school term, several people are litter picking and there is a general, although not complete, improvement. The diocese asked us to make known the rules on artificial flowers etc, on graves, and gentle notices have been placed requesting people to use real or silk flowers.

**Wildlife** - A hedgehog box and insect hotel have been installed to join the nesting boxes. A balance is being maintained between human and pollinator needs, and the churchyard is being cultivated as a place of remembrance, peace, and delight to people and wildlife alike.

Thank you very much to all involved with the churchyard upkeep and development. A special mention for Tony Dawkins, Paul Bryant and Roger Snelling.

Libby Goldsack  
(Churchyard co-ordinator)

## **10 Rector's Report**

2024 was a year of stability and change. Stability in that the traditions of St Mary's continue and we have a known and consistent pattern of what we are doing on Sundays and through the course of the year; Change driven by the retirement of people from some significant roles. Sally retired after 30 years as Parish Administrator (thank you, Sally, for your dedication and service), Judith passed on the baton for the Barnabas Group (thank you Judith, for your pastoral heart that continues to serve this community); we have taken on board the new Safer Recruiting requirements of the Church: appointing Mary Dawkins to lead the Barnabas Group and Pastoral Team; several people appointed as Children's Workers; and Maggie Wiseman as our new Parish Administrator (she started in September).

Sally's retirement highlighted how much the Administrator function is central to how the church operates, and a new administrator has given us the opportunity to review and make some changes to the way we do things – and the new arrangement of the church office is just an outward and visible sign of this.

I continue to value the energy and skills of so many people who work alongside me both 'at the front' in ministry and also in the very important 'making ministry possible' work of keeping buildings, finance and other practical things in order. The Church is a Christian Community, and in working together we fulfil not just "Knowing Jesus, Sharing God's Love, Caring for People"; but growing in faith and love as we participate in God's mission to his world.

Many names are mentioned in this meeting document – because you hold an office or write a report, or are in some other way 'visible': Thank you. And if your name isn't mentioned, Thank you – your ministry is no less a part of the Church, no less seen by God, and no less valuable – perhaps

more so: “your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”  
Mat 6:6.

Early in 2024 we were approached by 1st Newbury Boys Brigade who were looking for a new Church Home, and they officially moved to Shaw in September, and by Christmas had added a Girls Association so now both boys and girls are welcome and involved. Their numbers remain small and initiatives are underway to recruit new boys and girls. We have a planned programme of parade services where the boys and girls are invited to be with us and take part in the service. Ed is currently serving as their chaplain, and Jane Obin has become one of the brigade’s officers.

During the year we baptised 15 children, conducted 3 weddings, held 18 funerals (at the church or crematorium). We remember before God those who were part of our fellowship who died during the year: Amanda Collier, Joan Cooper, Ruth Houghton, Gill Lutterlock, Sue Povey, Sylvia Reed, Mary Taylor, and Pat Troughton.

I mentioned Safer Recruitment above, and this is one aspect of the Church of England’s Safeguarding and Clergy Discipling Measure 2016. In particular, we are complying with the code under section 5A.

The following table records the formal roles held within this church fellowship.

Incumbent Curate	Revd. Raymond Obin Revd. Ed Yates
Deanery Synod <sup>1</sup>	Libby Goldsack David Willetts
Elected members	Barbara Bradford (elected 2022) Sally Breach (elected 2022) Lesley Almond (elected 2023) Rachel Haslam (elected 2024) Mark Hutson :(elected 2023) Mike Stuart (elected 2023) Steve Joplin (elected 2024) Mary Dawkins (elected 2023)
Warden <sup>1</sup>	Ros Suart
Verger <sup>2</sup>	Derek Harwood
Administrator	Maggie Wiseman
Treasurer	Rachel Haslam
PCC Secretary	Sally Breach
Safeguarding Officer	Steve Joplin
Covenant Secretary	David Cobbett
Approved Stewards	Lesley Almond, Barbara Bradford, George Cummings, Mary Dawkins. Karen Fenwick, Sally Breach, Charles Garner, Libby Goldsack, Rachel Haslam. Mark Hutson, Mary Hutson, Wendy Seamons, Ros Stuart, Mike Stuart, Janet Sturgess, Jane Yates

Note: Stewards used to be approved by the APCM but this responsibility is now with the PCC. Stewards for the coming year will be approved at the next PCC meeting. If you would like to offer yourself or someone else, please contact the Rector or Warden.

## 11 Elections and APCM Approvals

PCC vacancies.

## 12 Time for open questions

- 13 Date of APCM next year  
Proposal: 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

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<sup>1</sup> Ex officio on PCC

<sup>2</sup> Co-opted to PCC