



St Mary's Church
At the heart of the community

**The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin
Wendover
Buckinghamshire**

**Annual Report
May 2023 to March 2024**

Vicar: Rev Sally Moring

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22 Market Square
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**Independent Examiner: Gavin Styles FCCA, Chapel Lane, High Wycombe,
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**The church of St Mary the Virgin is situated on the outskirts of Wendover.
It is part of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England.
The correspondence address is
Parish Office, 11 High Street, Wendover, Buckinghamshire, HP22 6DU.**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) became a registered charity in August 2009. Its registration number is 1131299.

PCC members who have served from May 23 to the date of approval of this report are:

Incumbent: Rev Sally Moring
Associate Priest: Rev Nadine Rose
Curate: Rev Matthew Routledge

LLMs: David Blackmore
Ian Sansbury

Churchwardens: Peter Dean

Deanery Synod Representatives:
Sian Chattle
Paul Dean
Edward Blakeman
Peter Dean

Elected Members: Paul Dean (Secretary)
Matt Ryan (Treasurer)
Sarah Frost
Monica Tompsett
Peter Lockett
Jennifer Ballantine
Johanna Free
Catherine Taylor
Anne-Marie Foster
Sharon Wilson
Jacqueline Smith
Michael Crockett

Ex Officio Alison Kirk (Diocesan Synod)

A: Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointing PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. New appointees are given an information pack. The PCC has passed a resolution by which a proportion of the PCC members will stand for re-election every three years, limited to a total of six years served. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. This is achieved by notices given out during church services, articles in the St Mary's newsletter and notices placed around the church.

The incumbent is currently Rev Sally Moring with Associate Priest Rev Nadine Rose and Curate Revd Matthew Routledge. David Blackmore and Ian Sansbury are licensed to serve in the parish as Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM).

The PCC operates by meeting during the year with various sub-committees meeting and conducting delegated activities and taking delegated responsibility in between. Methods of reporting back to the PCC range from the formal pre-distributed reports for discussion at PCC meetings, to informal verbal reports. The PCC became a registered charity in 2009 and is mindful of its responsibilities as Trustees. The major risks to which the church is exposed, as identified by the Trustees have been reviewed annually, and systems or procedures have been established to manage those risks.

B: Objectives and Activities

St Mary's PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the church building, St Mary's Centre, and the churchyard at Church Lane. Since 1992, the PCC has been a party to the Sharing Agreement of 1986 relating to St Anne's Church, Aylesbury Road, Wendover. The PCC also holds a lease over the premises at 11 High Street, Wendover (JUST shop and Parish Office). All of which contribute to our aim to be a church at the heart of the community. Details of our work are described more fully in the following reports from committees and other groups who contribute to our church community. The PCC depends on many volunteers who give freely of their time and talents. A major part of its activity

is the training and involvement of an increasing number of volunteers, doing practical projects or duties alongside others who are further involved as a trustee or a committee member. The benefits from volunteers' work, and our thanks to them, cannot be overstated, without them the viability of our church would be seriously affected. Our grant-making policy is twofold; special appeals which may arise, and giving at a budgeted annual level, where finances are available, as managed by the Global Church Committee.

Electoral Roll

Our Electoral Roll is managed by Jacquie Smith, our Electoral Roll officer. As required, the draft new register has been displayed in church for two weeks prior to the APCM. The number of people on the new Roll was reported at the APCM on 21st May 2023 which was 243 down by 3 from 2022.

The PCC

The full PCC met seven times during the past year using the online Zoom facility or in person at St Mary's. Committees met between meetings and a number reported formally to the PCC.

Church Attendance

We are required by the Diocese to report on the average weekly attendance for the first four weeks of October. This figure is one of the inputs to our Parish Share allocation. For 2023 the average weekly attendance for in person services was 89 and for online services at home services was 10. This period includes the October half term holidays so cannot be taken as a true reflection of 'average' church attendance. Also, being online it does include some households where more than one individual dialled in.

We also had the following numbers for occasional services held at St Mary's: 20 baptisms, 2 weddings and 19 funerals.

Committees

The PCC operates through a number of committees that meet between full meetings of the PCC:

Standing Committee (Chair: Sally Moring) *is responsible for transacting the business of the PCC between meetings, subject to any directions given by the*

PCC. The committee met seven times between the Annual Meeting of 2023 and 2024 and has reported formally to each PCC meeting.

In addition to the Standing Committee we also have the following committees, Finance and Governance, Estates Committee and People Committee that meet regularly during the year and report back to the PCC.

C: PCC Review of the Year

The year started with our first meeting after the APCM on 13th June 2023 via Zoom with only one agenda item to update the signatories on one of the bank accounts which was proposed seconded and passed by the meeting.

The second meeting was on 28th June 2023 where the PCC officers were elected being Matt Ryan as Treasurer, Paul Dean as secretary. The standing committee was elected as follows Revd Sally Moring, Revd Nadine Rose, Peter Dean, Paul Dean, Sian Chattle, Catherine Taylor, Anne-Marie Foster.

Sally then showed some slides which explained what the purpose of the PCC was. The following members were also elected to sub-groups, Michael Crockett to the Finance group and Jennifer Ballentine and Anne-Marie Foster to the People group. Helen Blakeman then gave the meeting an update on safeguarding and the training requirements for PCC members was explained. The Policy on Safeguarding was proposed seconded and passed by the meeting.

Matt then gave a finance update, and Global church charities were approved for donations being Tear Fund, Aylesbury Youth Concern, St Philips Chapel Street in Salford. Sarah Frost's preaching agreement renewal was proposed, seconded and agreed by the meeting. Nadine gave an update on the Children and Young People work. A Quinquennial report had been completed for the church and was sent out to members prior to the meeting.

The third meeting was on 28th September 2023, Peter Dean chaired this meeting as Sally was on her sabbatical. Matt gave us a finance update and said the budget for the year was running to plan. Sub-group report by Finance and Governance group was given which mentioned the Risk Register and possibility of buying JUST. The Estates group then gave a report and the worrying cost of energy was referred to, pressure was to be made to the company fitting the

new church doors as still not fitted. The People committee gave their report and we were advised that Employment policy, Payment review policy and Performance review policy were being looked at.

Nadine gave a safeguarding update and reminded PCC members on the training they need to undertake, Peter said he would like this completed before Sally returned from her sabbatical. Nadine then gave her Associate Priest update advising all the work she had been doing in Sally's absence, particularly mentioned the current youth worker issue and she had been having meetings with Ian Sansbury on this subject.

The fourth meeting was on 22nd November 2023, Peter Dean once again chairing the meeting. Matt gave a finance update handing out a summary document to everyone. Matt advised we are now spending more money than we are getting in and asked members to think how we can do some fund raising. We then had sub-group updates, David Blackmore advised the Estates group now have a sub group to look at the church's decarbonisation as if our Gas Boiler broke down we would not be permitted to buy a new gas boiler. A feasibility study was suggested. Safeguarding was reported by Peter who said training documentation was now nearly up to date, Helen Blakeman advised she had attended the Parish Safeguarding Officer Commissioning service. Helen also reported she is due to attend the Diocesan Safeguarding Leadership Pathway training. Associate Priest report from Nadine mentioned Matthew and herself had taken a lot of funerals recently. A Light Party took place and we celebrated the anniversary of David Blackmore's Lay Reader licensing.

The fifth meeting was held on 23rd January 2024 where we welcomed Sally back after her sabbatical. Matt gave is regular finance update and thanked Paul Moring for his work on reducing our energy bills. The budget for 2024 was discussed proposed, seconded and passed by the meeting including the paying of our full parish share. Matt advised that the Ministry Development fund runs out on 31st December 2024 so we need to do some fund raising, in addition to this the funding of a family and youth working will be required. Nadine gave an update on the family and youth pioneer worker situation and that grants were being sort to fund some of this. The PCC passed a motion to continue with this work. Sub-groups reports were received some being sent out prior to the meeting. The feasibility study on Energy Decarbonisation was proposed, seconded and passed by the meeting. We had a safeguarding update and Anne-Marie said she had now completed her first DBS check and that she was

now due to move on to the Sparklers helpers checks. Peter then took over the chairing of the meeting to discuss Prayers on Love and Faith that was recently commended by General Synod. Sally advised that Nadine, Matthew and herself are all happy to use these prayers. A proposal was passed by the meeting that the PCC fully support our clergy on this matter. Sally then gave her Vicar's report saying that her sabbatical had been useful and that she got through Christmas services in a more relaxed state to previous years. Sally advised she was due to have a meeting with Father Derek and Remco concerning the churches share agreement from 1992 as St Mary's no longer use St Annes church for any services. The meeting then split up into smaller groups to discuss the current MAP document on how we need to re-launch it as a Future Plan for St Mary's.

The sixth meeting was held on 13th March 2024. Peter Dean updated the meeting on Inclusive Church and Prayers for Love and Faith, Sally gave an update on safeguarding and advised that Helen Blakeman had attended a leadership training course. The meeting then discussed the Vision Work for St Mary's, PCC members had received documents from Sally in preparation for discussions on this subject the meeting split into separate groups and post it notes were completed on a number of subjects which were collated at the end. Sally gave us an update on the hole in the car park, Bishop Steven had sent an e-mail to all parishes with concerns on the lack of children in the church community and urged each parish to make this a top issue in their parish. David Blackmore gave an update on the Church Energy feasibility study.

Report by Paul Dean PCC Secretary

D: Financial Statement of the PCC

Treasurer's Report on the accounts for the year to 31 December 2023

Fund details for the financial year to 31 December 2023 are summarised in the table. Please note that fixed assets and depreciation have been excluded from the figures as they relate to past expenditure and not cash spent in 2023.

The General Fund below reflects the income and expenditure arising from the day-to-day activities of our Church. Other Funds for the Church have special rules applied to them and these restrict how the funds can be spent. During 2023 the Church accounts showed a decrease in total funds by £14,517, which is outlined below.

| Funds | Income | Expenses | Transfer/(Losses) | Surplus/ (deficit) | Funds at 31.12.23 |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| General | £182,009 | £166,139 | (£13,527) | £2,343 | £37,975 |
| Designated (All) | £560 | £30,205 | £7,640 | (£22,005) | £46,378 |
| Fabric (Restricted) | £14,143 | £33,283 | £- | (£19,140) | £10,283 |
| Legacy (Restricted) | £- | £- | £- | £- | £23,207 |
| Other Restricted | £17,895 | £19,473 | £1,281 | (£297) | £27,072 |
| Total | £214,607 | £249,100 | (£4,606) | (£39,099) | £144,915 |

General Fund

2023 saw a steady pattern for our finances at St Mary's. Planned giving, via the Parish Giving Scheme and regular standing orders was consistent with 2022 other giving from other sources such as direct payments, the website and the card reader increased quite significantly. The weekly cash collections were marginally down on 2022. Our income from hiring the church and centre and some fundraising activities was similar to 2022, however church fees, for weddings etc, increased by c£5,000. Overall, our total income in 2023 was £30,163 higher due to the church receiving several grants from organisations for many of the larger projects that were planned and carried out in 2023.

The JUST shop, once again made an enormous difference to our income as it donated over £13,203 from profits and contributed £9,966 towards running costs.

Our general fund costs increased slightly in the year with costs rising from £164,206 to £166,139. The largest general fund costs for the church in the year were Parish Share of £108,900, which was paid in full and meant that we were able to support the ministry of other churches in the Oxford Diocese. Running the shop cost £14,043 and our utilities continued to be a large proportion of our costs due to the energy price rises. Our gas and electricity costs were lower in the year than we had budgeted, due to our utility provider making errors with the 'smart' meter and these differences were written off by them. Larger works this year for repairs included the works on the churchyard wall at the start of 2023, plus the introduction of the automatic doors making the church more accessible. The AV works were capitalised and do not appear in the expenditure as their use will be seen for many years to come.

As a result of some the additional giving and the unexpected reduction to energy costs we ended the year with the General Fund making a surplus of £15,870. As agreed in 2021, the Global Church fund was increased by taking 2% of our general fund income which amounted to £3,640 which is used to make grants to local, national and international organisations. The balance at the year end was £3,762. In addition to this, the General Fund also transferred £4,000 to the Ministry Development Fund to provide enough resource for the Associate Priest role for 2024.

Other Funds

In the year the Ministry Development Fund, which had been setup to support the plans shown in the Mission Action Plan, spent £26,266. The church has made a commitment until November 2025 regarding payments for our Associate Priest. It was agreed by the PCC, that legacies received by the PCC would be designated to be used towards Ministry Development, unless restrictions were given by the donor. At the year end the Ministry Development Fund had £26,009 after transfers from the General Fund to carry forward to pay for one of the two years' salary costs.

Grants from the Friends helped to support the planned works on the automatic doors, some smaller internal maintenance as well as the introduction of the

energy efficient lights which has helped the church with its aim to reduce its carbon footprint.

It should be noted that none of the other restricted funds can be used against St Mary's running costs but restricted to fabric, the churchyard, bells, flowers amongst other things.

In the year we spent £39,099 more than we received across all our funds which obviously is not sustainable. Whilst there was some planned extra spending in 2023 we will all need to look to fundraising, increased giving and pursue significant grants if we wish to continue doing what we currently do, in addition to looking after the building.

Thank you

I would like to say a big thank you to all of you who have continued to support the church over the last 12 months. We are fortunate to have a faithful and generous congregation who support our work in Wendover.

Grants from outside sources have been received with much gratitude, notably the Friends of St Mary's, The Lionel Abel-Smith Trust, U3A and the Wendover Parish Council. Thank you to the donors, but also those who worked hard on researching and requesting fundraising.

Not only have we benefited from income but thank you to those of you who have helped us to keep our costs down, whether that be volunteering with posts or actively trying to save money on our running costs with particular note going to Paul Moring who has worked very hard to manage the energy providers!

Once again, we are hugely grateful to Helen Blakeman and her team at Just who have run the shop and have once again done a fantastic job in the year.

I would also like to give special thanks to all those who have supported me as treasurer during this year. I mention Sarah Bishop who has continued to help with some of the finance tasks! There are many others who work behind the scenes, so thank you for all you do.

Report by Matt Ryan, PCC Treasurer

E: Churchwardens' Report, including the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments

Looking back at my churchwarden's report for 2023, it's interesting to reflect on the continuities from last year as well as the new opportunities and issues that have arisen over the last twelve months. Many of the things that were work-in-progress last year have come to fruition, others are longer term projects that will occupy us for some time to come and there are new and fresh openings to consider – and I don't just mean the 'hole'. Such is a year in the life of a church community and building that has been around for hundreds of years.

We were pleased to be able to support Sally in her three-month sabbatical in the autumn of 2023. It's difficult to comprehend the full extent of the pressures and expectations on any incumbent – they are significant. It was good that we were able to support Sally and Paul in taking an opportunity for refreshment and renewal away from day-to-day church life. Whilst we all missed their contribution whilst they were away, the ministry team and many others stepped up their contribution to ensure that our activities continued as normal. Whilst well-supported by many others, Nadine, Julie and Matthew cheerfully took on a whole range of additional services, activities and responsibilities and I'd like to record our thanks to them here. And it did make us more appreciative of all that Sally does!

At the time of last year's Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), we were planning the motorisation of the main glass entrance doors. This work was completed successfully and has made the building more accessible as well as helping to save energy as they automatically close. Managing the works and the budget proved to be more complex than we anticipated, and completion took longer than expected but the result is a major improvement.

Also, underway last year was the Quinquennial Inspection of the building. We received the final report after the last APCM. The report was very thorough but also encouraging in terms of the current state of the building. We are still reaping the benefits of the major internal refurbishment project carried out over ten years ago now. The latest report did highlight a number of items for urgent attention but none of these were particularly major and they have been factored into the minor works being overseen by the Estates Committee. There

are also some longer-term recommendations that we will need to consider moving forward. These will be progressed through the Estates Committee and monitored by the PCC.

One thing we weren't anticipating at last year's APCM was the appearance of a large hole in the car park. You will probably know by now that this is the result of the collapse of a Victorian vault, possibly associated with the excessive rain this year. Unfortunately, we have had to close the car park whilst we investigate the safety of the whole area and work with diocese towards agreeing a faculty for the repair of the vault. This is on-going but we are making progress and hope to have the car park back in use (perhaps partially) as soon as possible.

Last year we were concerned about our non-renewable energy consumption and the associated costs. We have managed our way through the last winter, keeping the building acceptably warm and balancing our budget. However, this is unsustainable in the long term. Whilst the cost of gas and electricity is no longer increasing at the rate it was, it is likely to remain expensive and, ultimately, we need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels to retain any credibility as we promote caring for the environment as part of our faith.

Replacing halogen lights with LEDs has made a significant impact on our electricity consumption but using gas to heat the building cannot continue indefinitely. Oxford Diocese no longer permits the replacement of existing boilers with any fossil fuel-based replacement. Our current boiler is mid-life and working well but we cannot do nothing and be unprepared for its eventual end-of-life.

The team that worked on the last major internal refurbishment had the foresight to commission underfloor heating and so it would be possible to install a heat-pump driven heating system running on renewable electricity without major internal works. However, such a project would still be complex and, although it could pay for itself in lower energy costs, would require substantial capital investment.

Given the likely cost and recognising that we have finite capacity to manage large-scale projects, PCC is proceeding very cautiously. We have commissioned and received a feasibility study that suggest that the most efficient solution could be a heat pump extracting heat from Hampden Pond and using it to heat the church. Making use of the fortuitous proximity of the pond in such an

innovative way is of interest to the Parish Council (who have recently declared a climate emergency), the Diocese and the national church.

David Blackmore is leading this project with monitoring by the Estates Committee and PCC. We are taking a watchful step-by-step approach as we commission further design work and consider potential external capital funding. Hopefully we will make good progress with this but even if the project proves to be imprudent at this time, it will put us in a better position to address the issue when we eventually have no choice but to move away from fossil fuels. I expect to report on progress in next year's report but we will keep you fully informed through the PCC as we proceed.

Although care for the building is important and can dominate day-to-day considerations, St Mary's is much more about the people than the building. The People Committee have made steady progress on developing and submitting updated policies and procedures that cover our responsibilities as an employer and as a community venue – we have carried out a review of health and safety and updated risk assessments, minimising risks to users of the building.

All of our activities are dependent on so many volunteers that contribute their time and skills, enriching the life of the church in so many ways. Often this is quietly unseen, many things “just happen” but would not without the faithful service of individuals and teams. We were delighted to celebrate the contribution of so many at our recent joint service in February. This provided some recognition of all the work that goes into making St Mary's such a special and welcoming place. Thank you for all you do.

Report by Peter Dean, Churchwarden

F: Deanery Synod Report

Wendover Deanery Synod has met on three occasions over the last twelve months.

We met at St Mary's Wendover on June 7th 2023 and elected Gavin Oldham as chair, Gary Beynon as Secretary and a standing committee comprising of Edward Blakeman and Robert Donnell as lay representatives and Rev'd Sally

Bottomer and Rev'd John Simpson as clergy representatives as well as the Area Dean, lay chair, secretary and treasurer (this post is still not filled) . The meeting also discussed subjects which the synod would like to discuss so that future meetings could be planned.

Synod met again on September 27th at St Michael and All Angels, Aston Clinton and welcomed James Wood, Buckingham are Discipleship enabler who spoke to quite a sizeable group of local people involved in Children and Young Peoples work in their parishes. The meeting was encouraging of those doing this work and provoking to those who can help to influence decisions about what's Is happening in our local parishes. Since then, there has been a diocesan initiative launched to raise the number of children we are engaging with.

Deanery synod then met on January 30th 2024 at St Peter and St Paul, Great Missenden and welcomed Paul Moring, our Deanery Environmental Lead. He spoke to a group of both synod members and others from the local parishes about what the diocese is encouraging us to do.... to look at our energy and other ways of conserving our world. There was discussion about Eco- Church membership and a share of what parishes are doing to make a difference. Paul gave some theological input and encouraged parishes to be teaching on this subject on a regular basis.

The next Deanery Synod meeting takes place on Wednesday May 15th at St Mary's, Wendover.

Report by Revd Sally Moring

G: Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

The Church of England and the Diocese require each church to have in place policies on Safeguarding, to support our '*working with children and young people*', to consider in our own context all aspects of the '*Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults in the Diocese of Oxford*' policy - to ensure procedures are in place to ensure a safe environment for children and young people, and Vulnerable Adults - in all aspects of St Mary's work. Within the policies and guidance, it considers all aspects of current disclosure procedures under the "Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure safe recruitment of volunteers and employees".

Our church follows the guidance and good practice on Safeguarding issued by Oxford Diocese. Our current Safeguarding Policy, for Children & Vulnerable Adults can be found in the church porch and centre. We make an annual return to the Oxford Diocesan to confirm that we are following guidelines and that we have noted changes in requirements. Making this return has become more streamlined through the Safeguarding Dashboard for Parishes, and the questions asked help us to know that our policies and procedures are in line with requirements, or that some aspects require renewal, or need to be developed. The Dashboard reflects the requirements of the national Safeguarding Handbook 2018 (revised 2019).

The ministry team, led by the Vicar, receive specific Safeguarding training and guidance from the Diocese. The PSO (Parish Safeguarding Officer) has recently completed three levels of Diocesan training and is now Certificated at Leadership Level. The PSO has the opportunity to participate in the regular on-line “drop-in” sessions hosted by Tsungai Muchegwa, the Safeguarding Adviser for Buckinghamshire churches. She also attended the Diocesan Safeguarding Service and Workshops for PSOs at Christchurch Cathedral (19th November).

The PCC considers St Mary’s approach to Safeguarding in the context of current Diocesan Guidance and model Policies, particularly taking account of the role of volunteers and the changing nature of activities in the church. At St Mary’s we have many volunteers helping to lead the various activities for both children, young people and vulnerable adults. All volunteers and paid workers have to undertake periodic training in safeguarding awareness under the auspices of the Diocese, the majority of which is delivered on-line. Much work has been done by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to regularise levels of training necessary for different roles, and the frequency of such training. Most on-line training modules last between 60, 90, or 120 minutes, and the PCC will consider how to support individuals needing to complete training modules, but for whom doing so online is not possible from home.

The online training modules are continually updated and each module comes with helpful guidance on how to navigate through the course on a computer or tablet, and it is set up to enable users to pause in a module, or to see the spoken commentary as printed text (PCC members, and Volunteers, whether working with children or vulnerable adults, requiring initial or updated training, have already been able to use online resources from the Diocese during the past year).

Safeguarding and Communication issues in the context of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) remain an important consideration, as do compliance with National Guidance on the use of social media.

The sub-committee structure of the PCC now makes it easier to address issues of protocol, and to look in detail at policies and documentation requiring ratification – for example, the policy and guidance on Safer Recruitment and People Management, and procedures to deal promptly with any Safeguarding allegation or concern. The PCC should confirm the nature of reporting on Safeguarding it requires for its regular meetings - It may be that this is a regular review of the Safeguarding Action Plan for St Mary's displayed on the Diocesan Parish Dashboard for Safeguarding.

What is most important is that all volunteers are aware of 'Best Practice'. St Mary's has adopted two Good Practice Guides – one for children and one for vulnerable adults. These guides include a Code of Conduct and other relevant support materials. These documents have been distributed in the past to volunteers working in the church community in different contexts; they will now be reviewed in the context of current guidance, and once adopted by the PCC will be re-distributed. Bellringers have recently received specific guidance and training from the Diocese, and have identified members of that team requiring DBS clearance which is now being processed by the Verifier, Anne-Marie Foster.

Volunteers are DBS checked as required, through AccessPCS, the Diocesan preferred Verification organisation. As the APCS procedures enable automatic renewal communication with individuals (if they sign up to this), the work of the Verifying Officer is helped. The PSO and Verifier will, following the APM, construct a new spreadsheet of the Training completed, and DBS checks processed, in relation to members of the PCC and other volunteers. On the Diocesan website there is detailed guidance to clarify which volunteers need to be DBS checked, and at which level. On the Government website linked to DBS is further definition of "Volunteer".

In addition to guidance provided by the Diocese, excellent guidance is available on the NSPCC website in relation to "keeping children safe". The Diocesan guidance includes helpful protocols for communication with Families, Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults – whether by phone, electronic means, by distance or by face-to-face visiting.

Currently, related to Safeguarding, if anyone has cause for concern about any vulnerable adult or young person and would like to talk in confidence, then please contact Helen Blakeman, the Safeguarding Officer.
(h.blakeman3@btinternet.com)

Report by Helen Blakeman, Safeguarding Officer

H: Vicars Report

It's been another busy year since the last APCM with much to celebrate but also some sadness.

We were very privileged to host the Buckingham Area ordination of priests on Saturday June 24th by the Bishop of Buckingham and amongst those being ordained was Matthew Routledge, our curate. The ordination was a real celebration as was the following morning when Matthew presided at communion for the first time surrounded by his family, friends and the church family.

Thanks to a huge amount of work by a group from church we staged a 'Celebration of wedding dresses' in July. A collection of dresses across the decades, the earliest from 1906, was assembled and complimented with flower arrangements and memorabilia. The church was busy with appreciative visitors all weekend and we ended with a songs of praise service.

I was very privileged to have a sabbatical from 1st September to 30th November 2023. Thanks to Nadine, Matthew and Julie as well as Pete Dean I was able to leave behind parish life for 3 months to rest, renew and refresh. Paul and I did this by spending time with our family, going to Morocco and Northumberland and resting; I also went on retreat and on a sewing course. 17 years in ordained ministry had taken its toll and it was good to set back.

Finishing sabbatical on Nov 30th meant returning for Advent and Christmas which once again were busy but also great fun! Thanks to our musicians we once again had a beautiful carol service. During the week between the carol service and Christmas Day we estimate 1500 came into our church churchyard. Wendover CE junior school Christmas services brought large numbers as did

the carol service, services on Christmas Eve and Christmas day. This included the successful Christmas Eve outdoor service for the local community.

Our week-by-week worship has continued supported by those who lead, preach, play music, read and intercede and we have covered many themes exploring how we live out our Christian faith in our daily lives. The use of our church building has increased with many calling in to visit our beautiful church and to pray where prayers have been said for centuries. I am very grateful to the Ministry team who contribute to so much as well the work of Pete, Paul, Matt and the whole PCC. None of it could happen without the work of Julie, our parish administrator who co-ordinates so much in the background.

Our work with children, young people and families looks very different at the moment than it has done in previous years – the numbers of children attending on a Sunday has decreased but Sparklers, our toddler group on a Monday is thriving and one – off events such as the Christmas eve outdoor service, the light party and Pancake party show things one -off events are very popular. We are hoping to appoint a Pioneer children, young people and families worker later this year with support from the Diocesan development fund. Our relationship with the local schools and nurseries has developed; both Matthew and Sally are governors at the Junior school and Nadine has a good relationship with the Children's room nursery as well as serving as a Trustee of Wendover Youth Centre. Regularly leading Collective Worship allows us to build up relationships with both children and staff and we hope to support the wellbeing of staff in the next term.

At St Marys we are very lucky to have so many volunteers and in February we gave thanks for all those who do give of their time at the 'Thank you volunteers' celebration. Individual invitations were issued to which many responded ... but we still need new people to come forward and help with many activities...live streamers, cleaners, readers, intercessors, coffee makers to list but a few roles. Getting involved deepens relationships and enables us to be more pro-active in our community. Please do consider how you can help.

Sadly, a number of prominent members of the church family died during 2023 and into 2024- these included Dr Colin Riley, Robert Phipps, Tony Farmer, Doris Jones, Mary Paice, John Bussien, Ron Smith and Derek Roxberry, Beryl Pearn, Ray England. They all contributed much to the life of our church, and we miss them. We were all very shocked and saddened when, on February 17th, the news came of the very sudden and unexpected death of our bishop, the Bishop

of Buckingham, the Rt Rev'd Alan Wilson. Bishop Alan was last at St Mary's for the ordination in June 2023 and was a great friend and ally of St Mary's. We will miss his leadership and friendship very much.

We are always looking forward at St Mary's and at the moment are working on our vision for the next 5 years. Climate change and its effects are dear to us as is continuing to be at the heart of our community. Our desire to care for each other and others is important as are the lives of our young people and their families. Prayer and our individual relationships with Jesus are key to all that happens as Christian people and we long to develop that too. How we welcome and share hospitality is so important- something we each have a part to play in and which must express our love of God as well as our love for our neighbour. Please pray for the life of our church and its growth and authenticity.

Sally Moring

April 2023

Annual Report was reviewed and approved by the PCC at their meeting on 11th April 2024

