



**St Mary's Church**  
At the heart of the community  
**Annual Review**  
**2023-24**





# A Message from our Vicar

Welcome to the annual review of life at Saint Mary's Church Wendover capturing much that has happened in 2023 and the beginning of 2024. This report includes what we've been able to capture in photographs which give you a sense of times of joy and celebration, a sense of our worship week by week and the many ways in which our church is used throughout the week.



Over the last 12 months we have worked hard to adapt our church building to make it easier for people to come into, especially the motorising of the glass doors. We are very grateful for the donations from Heart of Bucks, Wendover Parish Council and the Lionel Abel Smith Trust. We have been host to a number of concerts and events when we have welcomed visitors both from our village and beyond; in particular the ordination of priests held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023 when our curate Matthew Routledge was ordained priest by the Bishop of Buckingham, Bishop Alan Wilson. Many marvel at the versatility of our church which allows us to hold Tea dances or the celebration of wedding dresses and toddler groups. More about these as you read through the review.

Many contribute to the life of Saint Mary's, and it was good to hold our 'Thank You to our Volunteers' service in February where we gathered bellringers, flower arrangers, coffee makers, readers, intercessors, PCC members, Just shop volunteers, our music group, those who clean the church as well as the ministry team. Thank you to so many for all that you do or have done which contributes to making ours a welcoming church to those who drop in during the day, to those who come to our regular services, to those who attend funerals baptisms and weddings and to those who attend events outside services. This welcome is so important to everyone, whoever they may be.

*Sally*



# Our Worshipping Community

## Special Services

Throughout the last twelve months we have had many services in church – those that celebrate and those that remember. We marked the Coronation of King Charles III on May 7<sup>th</sup> with commemorative bell ringing and themed flowers. During the Celebration of Wedding Dresses, we held a Songs of Praise with favourite wedding hymns as voted for by the congregation, readings and memories shared.

In April two members of St Mary's congregation were confirmed alongside four members of St Mary's, Stoke Mandeville by Right Reverend David Jennings.



**Pulpit Decorations for the Coronation**

Our summer series of services in 2023 focused on 1 Thessalonians and its message to us as a church today to rejoice always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances. At harvest time the church was beautifully decorated, and we celebrated all God's goodness to us in our Sunday services.



**Confirmation Service - April 2023**

The year continued with our annual memorial service, where we came together with the Free Church and St Anne's RC Church to remember all those who had died over the previous year and longer ago. This was well attended and made more poignant by the lighting of candles and placing of flowers for loved ones on the altar. During the year we saw a number of significant funerals for members of the Wendover community and our church congregation, including Dr Colin Riley, Pete Dunkley, Christopher Dean (complete with doggy guard of honour), John Bussien and Tony Farmer.

As always, our celebrations of Christmas and Easter were well supported and brought a huge amount of joy to the many who attended. These included Christingle, our wonderful Carol Service, the outdoor pop-up Nativity, and our Dawn Vigil on Easter Morning.

# Those Who Contribute to our Worship



**The Music Group in Action at a 10.45am Service**

## Music Group

2023 has been yet another busy year for St Mary's choir and music group. There is a core body of musicians who regularly sing and play at both the 9 o'clock and 10.45 services every Sunday. This nucleus provides music for the congregation to enjoy throughout the year, even through the summer months, and is joined by other members on special occasions.

Our music director, Edward Blakeman has led us with his usual patience and good humour, encouraging us to achieve a really high standard of music for many occasions.

These included our Carols by Candlelight service, which was, once again, successful and we received many positive comments. Last year we also introduced a short service of Taizé music which we hope to repeat this autumn. Most importantly though, we've all enjoyed providing a large variety of music to lead the congregation and enrich the worship of St Mary's.

*Sian Chattle*

## Flowers

St Mary's has always been well known for its flowers, which complement our worship and the beauty of our church building through the seasons. We are lucky to have a lovely team of regular flower arrangers of all abilities who take it in turns to create beautiful displays in church on a rota basis and who all come together to share their range of talents and creativity for Church Festivals and special occasions when we are really able to go to town!



**Jean Busy Preparing for a Wedding**

## Bell ringers

We currently have 16 members of St Mary's band of ringers - the largest membership we have had in many years. This means that we frequently have eight or ten ringers for Sunday services and for the celebration of weddings and special occasions, which is fantastic. One of our biggest achievements in the past year has been successfully achieving three  $\frac{1}{4}$  peals for the King's Coronation. Although a very sad occasion, we were also proud to ring for the late Queen Elizabeth's passing and were able to successfully carry out all ringing requirements, including ringing fully muffled for the State funeral.

## Ministry Team

At St Mary's we are particularly fortunate to have a strong Ministry team who can contribute much to our worship. Our regular worship is put together and led by both our Licensed Lay ministers, David Blackmore (who celebrated 10 years as an LLM in 2023) and Ian Sansbury, Sarah Frost who is an authorised preacher and our clergy team. Matthew Routledge continues his curacy, Nadine Rose takes a lead on our work with Families, Children and Young people and Sally Moring leads the whole team as well as acting as Area Dean of Wendover.

The breadth of the sermons we hear weekly enrich us all and help to deepen our relationship with Jesus.

Until June 2023 we had Michelle Fotherby with us whilst she trained for ordination. Some of us were able to support her at her ordination as a deacon; she is now curate at Amersham.



**Michelle's Ordination as Deacon**

## Readers and Intercessors

We are blessed to have a wonderful team of regular readers for our Sunday services at St Mary's who help us discover and rediscover the word of God each time we join together and a small, but dedicated group of intercessors whose important ministry inspires and leads our prayers for others each week. Prayer is a vital part of our communication with God and being led by a variety of individuals with different approaches and styles deeply enhances our worship experience.



# Times of Celebrating in Church



## Family Fun Afternoon

In early July 2023 a fun afternoon for all the family took place in the grounds of St Mary's.

There was a tea party, games, crafts, candy floss and face painting, plus a very special story time led by Sophie – as you will see from the photos a great time was had by all!

## Celebration of Wedding Dresses

Later in July 2023 we staged a Celebration of Wedding dresses in the church where we showcased 24 wedding gowns (each with their own individual story), plus bridesmaid and page boy outfits and assorted wedding memorabilia from across the decades, loaned to us by past St Mary's brides and members of our congregation. These were complemented by gorgeous floral creations, all designed and executed by our talented St Mary's flower team.

Hundreds of people visited the exhibition over the weekend to see how bridal style had changed over the decades and enjoy the beauty of St Mary's decorated in full wedding style.



## School Services

Children from Wendover CE Junior school come to St Mary's each year for Harvest, Christmas, Easter and Leaver's; it's a pleasure to welcome them and their parents. Year Three came to St Mary's for a morning about being Baptised, this included a mock Baptism Service which the children thoroughly enjoyed. During Holy Week the whole Junior School came along to Experience Easter. It has also been a joy to see the Children's Room Nursery regularly come along to St Mary's Church for their Achievements Service and Christmas Service.

# Being at the Heart of the Community

St Mary's strives to be at the heart of our community by opening our doors every day to those who wish to come in and visit and to pray. We also host all kinds of community events.



## Tea dances

Several tea dances have taken place during the year, open to all the community, with dancing led by Dance Swing MK and tea and refreshments provided by volunteers from Wendover Dementia Support.

## Concerts

We regularly host concerts at St Mary's. Wendover Choral Society performed twice in 2023; in the summer and at Christmas, Wendover Music held a concert in July 2023 and there are two scheduled for 2024. The hugely popular Wendover Singers held two packed concerts in June 2023 and plan the same this year.

Chiltern Arts held a performance of Renaissance Dances in St Mary's in May and the Echor Orchestra returned with their candlelit Baroque concert at Christmas. The Herts Chamber Orchestra held a fundraising concert for Rennie Grove, and a group of talented young musicians played to raise money for Ukraine. We're so lucky to have amazing acoustics in our building and would happily host others who wish to play in it.



## Eco church

Being more conscious of energy efficiency and especially installing LED lamps has halved our electricity consumption over 4 years.

Encouraging wildlife and plant life in the churchyard continues to be critical. There are still many opportunities to reduce our impact on Creation.



# Families, Children and Young People

*It belongs to the centre of the Christian message that children are not properties to own and rule over, but gifts to cherish and care for. Our children are our most important guests, who enter into our home, ask for careful attention, stay for a while, and then leave to follow their own way. Children are strangers whom we have to get to know.*

**Henri Nouwen**

Over the year we have done lots with our families, children and young people and are dedicated to nurturing the spiritual development of the next generation.

Each week either Sally, Remco, Matthew or Nadine leads a Collective Worship at Wendover Junior School. The Junior School celebrated Harvest and Christmas with beautiful services led by the children. This year we have also led Christingle and Easter Collective Worship at the John Hampden Primary School.

At the end of October we held another “Light Party” which provided an opportunity to share the light and Good News of Jesus to 26 children in our community. The party was lots of fun, with food, games, activities and stories. Our Pancake Party was also extremely successful again. The children and young people enjoyed a host of craft activities, games, stories and eating pancakes (we had just enough pancakes!).

Sparklers, our weekly baby and toddler group, continues to grow. Sparklers provides a space in the community for pre-school children to play and to start to develop their social skills. It also provides an opportunity for parents, grandparents, childminders to share experiences, concerns and to sit back and enjoy a cup of tea/coffee made for them. This year we provided the adults with a Lent Bag, this instigated

some good conversations about faith.



While we celebrate the successes of the past year with a profound sense of gratitude, we recognise that we are not able to regularly connect with young people and acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead with a renewed sense of purpose. Together, let us continue to sow seeds of faith, cultivate spaces of belonging, and empower the next generation to shine brightly as ambassadors of God's love in the world.

*Nadine*

# JUST - Ethical Trading at the Heart of the Community



Just is now a well-established and known shop in the heart of our High Street in Wendover. Our focus on ethically produced, fair trade and environmentally conscious products is serving us well in the current economic climate. This coupled with our commitment to keep our retail prices modest has seen a steady income and a continued loyal following from our customers.

We have been able to contribute a very healthy £13,203 from profits to St. Marys this year and a further £9,966 towards JUST's running costs. We are proud of this contribution and are always striving to do better and contribute more in all we do.

Our dedicated and brilliant team of volunteers continue to bring a wide and varied range of skills and experience to the business ensuring the smooth running of Just. We are known for our excellent range of greeting cards, have expanded our range of Eco-Friendly Card Company cards and plan to expand further this year.

We are thrilled to have introduced a newborn section in our children's area, a gap in our collection, and it has been warmly received. Lanka Kade children's toys and puzzles remain a stalwart as do Seedball wildflower seed sets. Our Ecover range and eco products for home continue to do well as does our food section with brands such as Tony's Chocolonely, Clipper, Pukka Herbs, Zaytoun and Candy Kittens.

We have a good presence on social media using both Instagram and Facebook but by far the pièce de resistance is our shop window. The 'award winning' window team create interesting, relevant, seasonal displays that not only showcase what is in store but reflect our aims and ethos. We will be participating in Fair Trade fortnight again this year as well as the Christmas events as part of a village wide celebration and are also very proud to be a designated 'Safe Place' in the village for anyone that needs it.

We wouldn't be the JUST we are without our amazing volunteer army! They are the bedrock of our success, and we quite simply could not open our doors without them. We are so grateful to Helen Blakeman who does a fantastic job managing things and the entire team. We look forward to serving St. Marys and our community in 2024 and hope we can make it our best year ever. See you in store!

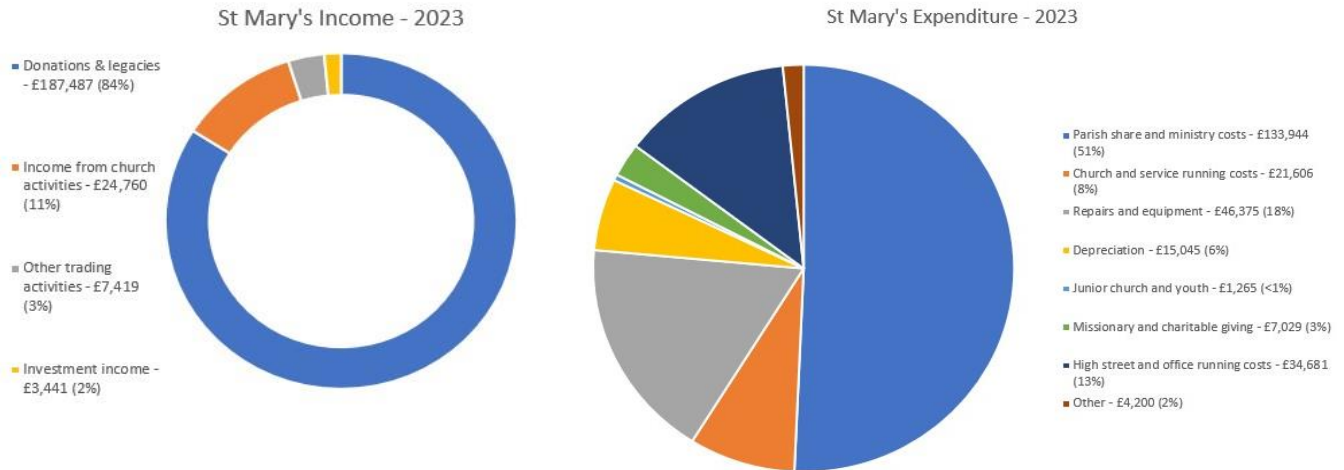
*The JUST team*



# Giving

We are very grateful to all who give to the mission and ministry of St Mary's Wendover whether that be through regular giving, donations, legacies, or our fundraising activities. We also receive money from grants, hire of the church and from visitors.

In 2023 our total income was £223,107 and our total expenditure was £264,145 – the breakdown is below.



We now have a contactless machine like this one just inside the entrance at church wish to use this to give to St Mary's. We hope visitors will too.

Thank you to those of you who give via Parish Giving Scheme; you'll find more details about this on our web site.



We have ambitious plans to develop our work in our community over the coming years, so we are able to be part of our Diocesan vision to be 'A more Christ-like Church': Contemplative, compassionate and courageous for the sake of God's world. We need to all support these plans, prayerfully, financially and by giving time.



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