



**Papers for the St. Mary's Church  
Congregation AGM  
16<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

Also available to read on the church website

[www.stmaryshorhsam.org.uk](http://www.stmaryshorhsam.org.uk)

# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH CONGREGATION & COUNCIL**

The AGM will be held in St. Mary's Church on Sunday 16th February 2025  
during the 10.00 service

## **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024
3. Matters arising
4. Review of 2024   a) reports (included in paperwork)  
                          b) pastoral update
5. Financial report
6. Nominations:   Parish Wardens (3 vacancies, to be elected at the APCM)  
                          Deputy Church Wardens (3 vacancies)  
                          PCC (3 vacancies)  
                          St. Mary's Church Committee (8 vacancies)  
                          Deanery Synod (4 vacancies)
7. Comments from Cath Hatton (Churchwarden)

## **Parish of Horsham**

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of St. Mary's Church Congregation**

**Held in St. Mary's Church during the 10am service on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

Revd. Lisa Barnett (Team Rector and Chair) along with 259 members of the congregation were present.

1. The service already held to this point was taken as the opening prayer.
2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Brenda Large, Richard Pearson, Janet and Clive Palmart, Pamela and Ray Whitehouse and Veronica Kidd.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023.

Minutes had been circulated in advance. It was agreed that they were a true record of the meeting.

4. There were no matters arising.
5. Items from the Team Rector.

Items from the Team Rector were covered in her sermon earlier in the service in which she gave recognition and thanks for the welcoming, supporting and nurturing nature of our church community.

6. Reviews of the 2023 reports

a) Lisa thanked all those who had submitted reports which had been sent out to everyone in advance and are also available to read on the website. It was hoped that people had had an opportunity to read the reports which show how much encouragement, dedication and energy goes into our church life. There were no comments or questions. People were welcomed, if interested, to talk to the authors of the various reports for more information.

b) Morag Davies gave thanks for the lives of those from our Church family who had died in 2023 and prayed that they may now rest in peace and rise in glory: Isobel Reid Clayton, Jock Goodall, John Priddle, David Hitchings, Pam Bolden, Frederick Smith, Joyce Porter, Margaret Hearnden, Mary Radford, Jonathan Powell, Barbara Smith, Jane Bowen, Chris Barrs, Connie Caddell, Lois Dart, Richard Phipps, Philip Thomas, Michael Phillips, Nancie May Norriss, Gillian Barber, Alan Strong, Michael Dodds and Eileen Wheeler.

7. Financial report

Nikki Barber reported that the end of year accounts are currently being prepared but the main points are that the 2023 financial year has ended with a surplus of around £25,000, regular stewardship increased by an encouraging 5% compared to 2022, open plate and machine gifts were significantly above budget and 2022. There were 19 weddings and 54 funerals or memorial events. Costs were generally lower than budget and some expected items did not occur, including the quinquennial architect review of the fabric which has been delayed until 2024. A number of contracts were re-tendered, including insurance, which resulted in savings. We continued to benefit from our fixed price gas and electricity but these expired the latter part of 2023 so are expected to increase significantly this year. We were able to meet the Deanery contribution target for our Parish Share which was 5% above the amount required to cover the costs of our clergy and the wider mission of the diocese. All the money required for the South Aisle project was raised and there are plans to fundraise for the £10,000 kitchenette. For 2024 we are budgeting to break even and the PCC has agreed that the bulk of our 2023 surplus will cover some of the larger expected costs of this year including the quinquennial review, essential fire safety work at the Church

Centre and some refurbishment of the cottage at 33 Causeway as we prepare for our new curate's arrival. Lisa thanked Nikki for her report and all her work.

#### 8. Nominations.

Parish Wardens: Peter Fruin, Cath Hatton and Morag Davies will be standing again and the elections will take place at the APCM.

Deputy Church Wardens: Sue Keegan, Paul Goodwin and Linda Emery are continuing to serve and were, therefore, duly re-elected.

PCC: Lisa proposed that Linda Goodwin and Greg Andrews take the two vacancies and that Liz Lobb to be co-opted on as the new Safeguarding Officer. This was agreed and passed.

Deanery Synod: Nigel Stalley was nominated and duly elected. There are three other vacancies.

St. Mary's Church Committee: Linda Emery, Laura Fletcher, Nikki Barber, Liz Wingett, Richard Pearson, Hennie Sleeman, Judie Finlay and Lindsay Dart were nominated and duly elected.

#### 9. Chairman's comments

Lisa thanked everyone involved in the running of the church whether up front or behind the scenes and also warmly invited anyone who would like to chat or find out more about the running of the church to talk to her or anyone in any of the teams.

#### 10. Closing Prayer

The church service continued with the closing hymn and final blessing.

# Reports for the year 2024

## Almhouses

St. Mary's Almshouse comprises ten, one bedroom flats at a beneficial rate. One flat is occupied by the Resident Warden. The accommodation is split between east and west houses situated on Normandy. The flats cater for the older person of limited means, still wishing to lead an independent lifestyle. St Mary's Almshouse is a separate, registered charity, run by Trustees who are in post by virtue of their office: the vicar and three churchwardens; plus a co-opted Trustee.

This report is an opportunity on behalf of the church family to thank all those who help with the running of St. Mary's Almshouse. Particular thanks to our Resident Warden, Joanne, and wife Gill who carries out gardening and small maintenance jobs. The care and assistance they give assures the almshouse looks great and runs smoothly. Joanne and Gill are available for our residents, seven days a week.

Victoria Sturdy took over pastoral visiting at the Almshouse after Linda Goodwin stood down. Thank you to both for their regular visits, offering a caring and listening ear. Thank you to Janet & Clive Palmart, our honorary treasurers, who maintain the accounts. The Almshouse accounts are independently examined by Mark Thompson (Kestrel Accounting). Finally, a vote of thanks to our Clerk to the Trustees, Michael Miles.

As well as the comprehensive fire alarm system, each flat kitchen has now been supplemented with a fire blanket. Joanne and Gill have installed an outdoor pergola with a pull-back cover in the outdoor garden seating area. Normal maintenance includes annual checks for the eleven boilers on site; quarterly inspections of the fire alarm system; annual electrical inspections; annual rainwater clearance work; general maintenance and repairs. Planned improvement works include upgrading a bathroom to a walk-in shower and refurbishment of the en-suite facilities in the guest room.

Steve Benson, Co-opted Trustee

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## Bellringers

We have rung for the 10am Service every Sunday and we ring for some Evensongs. We have also rung for special occasions and Weddings during the year. Two of our recruits are now ringing competently and are regularly ringing for Sunday services

The bells continue to be well maintained by members of the band.

Several of us continue to help out at Rusper and Lower Beeding who without our help would not be able to ring.

On Practice nights we regularly ring Cambridge and Yorkshire Major, Stedman and Grandsire Caters.

We have enjoyed several social events during the year and a Tower Dinner in November.

We sent a donation of £95 to Cancer Research instead of sending Christmas Cards.

My thanks must go to the Committee and the rest of the band for all their support.

Val Burgess Tower Captain

## **Buildings and Fabric**

1. This report covers the outcomes and plans for St Mary's Church and the Church Centre.

Team composition: Mike Watson (Premises Manager from mid-February 2024), and 5 volunteers: Ray Hambling (until September 2024), Paul Goodwin, Nick O'Riordan(chair), Nigel Stalley and Bob Whittaker. The team meets at 3 monthly intervals at which tasks are assigned appropriately and progressed.

To assist with coordination, Laura Fletcher, Cath Hatton and Peter Fruin have also attended Fabric team meetings.

Normal maintenance activities have been carried out by the team and term contractors throughout the year largely without incident and only exceptional items are reported below.

2. **St Mary's Church (QI architect Simon Dyson, next report due April 2029)**

- 2.1 Church Fabric

The Quinquennial inspection report was delivered in June. Highest priority items revolved around gutter cleaning and maintenance; mortar erosion continues in several places.

The structural integrity of the Hoo Memorial canopied tomb has been evaluated and is now subject to visual monitoring.

Deterioration of the Horsham stone roof of the church, in the form of continual spalling and erosion of mortar, continues.

A Faculty was granted in July for a kitchenette in European Oak to be installed at the West end of the South Aisle; the kitchenette and mobile servery came into service successfully in early December. Last year's works to the South Aisle won an award from the Sussex Heritage Trust at their annual ceremony in July 2024.

After Easter, an image from the V&A photo archives of the Last Supper and The Annunciation, Victorian overpainting of earlier Medieval murals that were whitewashed over in the late 1960's, was projected onto the West wall to raise awareness. We sought funding for scientific investigation of the paintings but our submission was not selected.

- 2.2 Heating controls

In late 2023 we obtained a grant from HDC's Climate Change Fund for the installation of Nest learning thermostats across all buildings in the Parish. Thermostats have been installed and have been working well in the church and Church Centre over the past year, producing benefits summarised in Section 6 below.

- 2.3 Churchyard

In early March a shallow brick vault, divided between two tombs collapsed. Human remains were recovered and reinterred. The process of infilling of the vault, which is located to the north-northwest of the tower was completed in November by Pilbeam Construction Ltd after a long period to obtain approval from Chichester Chancelry.

Again, through the Ecochurch/Caring for God's Acre initiatives, we continue to meet with Horsham District Council (HDC) staff to improve enjoyment and use of the accessible spaces to the west of the churchyard area and to improve biodiversity.

### 3. Church Centre (QI architect Robin Nugent, next report due January 2026)

#### 3.1 Change of Use

A small but still significant part of the motivation in the minor improvements to the Church Centre made in 2021 was to enable the St Mary's Pre-School to use the Manor Room weekdays and the Barn on three weekdays, termly. This required a Planning Change of Use and the process became stalled by the intervention of Natural England in requiring HDC to demonstrate water neutrality in non-domestic planning applications. The Change of Use application using new, metered data was submitted in January; a Noise Impact Assessment report was submitted.

#### 3.2 Signage and St Peter's Chapel

After many months of discussion with HDC, approval was granted for new signage at the Church Centre that uses the St Mary's logo on a blue background. It was installed in October. Over the summer period, Crawley Carpet Warehouse installed a new latex floor overlain by carpeting made from recycled marine plastics.

#### 3.3 Roof, guttering and soffits

Pilbeam Construction Ltd successfully carried out these works in September and October.

#### 3.3 Sound Transmission

Working with our party-wall neighbours at 31 Causeway, we successfully installed a trial acoustic panel in 2022. This will enable a permanent installation to hopefully be installed in 2025, subject to agreement with HDC Conservation officers.

### 4. Energy use and carbon footprint

In 2021 the PCC endorsed the General Synod's aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A particular challenge has been that the Parish has eight fossil fuel-based heating systems across its five buildings, of which only one can be considered modern and efficient. Through the year all of our heating systems have required repair and careful attention, against a backdrop of changes to Faculty rules in mid 2022 that no longer permit a straightforward like-for-like replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems.

We renegotiated our electricity and gas supplies to a single supplier, Smartest Energy in September. Unit rates have fallen in line with market forces since last year and the cost of energy appears to have stabilised.

We have taken on board the Net Zero Action Plan that the Diocese published in the autumn and are hoping to interact positively with those with expertise that is growing, so that we can continue to drive downwards our carbon footprint. We have been assessed to be one of the highest emitting parishes in the Diocese, partly due to the relatively high level of occupancy of some of our buildings, and we qualified for a free energy audit (carried out by Mondes in November 2024) together with modest funds to improve performance. We are a leading participant in the Net Zero Community of Practice, managed by Steve Collins for Chichester and Guildford Dioceses.

The table below shows our recorded energy consumption since 2019, together with the associated carbon footprint:

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
St Mary's Church	Gas (kWh)	262000	122000	168000	180000	196100	164300

		(95600 in Q4)				(69500 in Q4)	
	Electricity (kWh)	16800	10500	10200	13000	13500	13000
Church Centre	Gas (kWh)	100000	59000	50000	91200	59200	67900
	Electricity (kWh)	10500	7500	7600	9200	8700	8800
	Total Carbon footprint	73 tonnes	37.5 tonnes	44.5 tonnes	55.3 tonnes	52.3 tonnes	47.9 tonnes

In aggregate our carbon energy footprint has reduced over the past 5 years by nearly 30%, from 92 tonnes in 2019 to 67 tonnes in 2024

Through better, more mindful use of environmental controls and investment in more efficient heating and lighting systems, our aim is to reduce our carbon footprint to well below 2019 levels whilst increasing the level of use of our buildings.

The Fabric team is committed to drawing up a plan for the logical phasing out of as many of our fossil-fuel heating systems as possible over the next five years.

**Nick O’Riordan**

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**Caring**

As always we are so fortunate to have such a devoted and caring team of pastoral visitors that give their time so freely. We thank them very much for this ministry.

All requests for a visitor have been met as well as requests for Communion to be taken to the housebound.

We have had to abandon the service of driving parishioners to hospital and doctors appointments for various reasons. The main one being our volunteers felt their age meant it was time to step down and implications with insurance as well as the reluctance to update DBS checks and Safeguarding training.

Stepping Stones meets every month. Numbers are low but we still feel it’s a privilege to see the friends that come so faithfully.

Prayer Chain requests for members of our church family are sent round by email as soon as one arises, very quickly some twenty intercessors are holding the need in prayer. Prayer ministry at the 10am service takes place each week with two members of the team being on duty at a time.

Our wonderful choir visited Horsham hospital just before Christmas and sang carols for a good hour. Patients, visitors, doctors and nurses were all moved by their beautiful singing. They were still talking about it way after Christmas as it meant so very much to everyone.

Our plan for the next year hopefully would be to welcome younger members to the visiting team/ DBS checks and training would have to be put in place.



We are so very fortunate to have such a loving, caring and supportive church family.

Cath and I have felt this especially and thank everyone for the many messages of love, support and goodwill since the news we have had of Lisa and Peter. You are all very special to us both.

Morag Davies

### **Care Homes**

2024 was a busy year in terms of St Mary's input to Care Homes. The Care Home Leads for St Mary's, Holy Trinity & St Leonard's all met on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2024, along with Pete Dibdin, Development Co Ordinator for Horsham Churches Together, to share information with regards to Church input into Care Homes across Horsham. This resulted in the compilation of a list of Care Homes & church input in terms of the various services offered by churches in Horsham. Linda liaises with the Care Home leads for Holy Trinity & St Leonard's intermittently.

Following the awareness of some gaps in provision Linda, with either Pam or Victoria, commenced offering a simple Dementia Friendly service to Kings Court & Rosedale Homes, both in Kings Road in April 2024. These have been extremely well received by both Care Home staff & residents.

In the latter part of 2024 Linda liaised with the manager at Highwood Mill on the Highwood Village development off the A24 to enquire regarding church services offered there. This resulted in a monthly service being offered by Rev Mark Lavender, Vicar at St John's Broadbridge Heath (with some of his parishioners) & Linda to residents at Highwood Mill commencing with a Carol Service held in December. Linda also joined St John's Broadbridge Heath at the Carol Service which took place at Broadbridge Park Care Home mid-December.

From January 2025 Linda will be visiting Highwood Mill on a monthly basis to offer a 'listening ear'/chaplaincy.

Various members of the Pastoral team (St Mary's) continue to offer Services including Holy Communion in a number of Horsham Care Homes/Residential Homes.

Linda Goodwin

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### **Children and Families**

#### **Sunday Club**

This year we've welcomed some new regular members. Numbers fluctuate but are growing. Families with toddlers prefer to join us rather than staying in the creche so we have a wide age range. We continue to base sessions on TrueWay Kids Old Testament lessons, focusing on special occasions when they come up. Thanks Louise & Kulod, Dana & Liz Lobb who lead when I'm on leave. Abigail Fogg is also joining the team.

During school holidays we meet in the crèche for informal crafts, games and chat in the chapel.

#### **Crèche**

This is well used during services by families with very young children and by older children during the school holidays. Sue West supervises the space, keeping it tidy & supplied.

#### **Fused**

Lee & I continue to lead joint sessions for children and young people in the barn once a term. These are fun get-togethers which help everyone to get to know each other better.

Informal Family Service – 3.30pm

These continue on the first Sunday of the month. We have a community of regular families with new people coming along each time. Thanks to Michael Miles & the Tea Team.

First Holy Communion

We held 4 sessions after church in the spring preparing children to begin taking Holy Communion.

Little Footprints

We have a good group of around 15-25 children and their parents/carers each week, though unfortunately no regulars to create a rota. Mike (Premises Manager) is going to help set up/clear away which will be a great help. I'll also do a volunteer drive this term.

Open the Book

The team have continued to bring bible stories into St Mary's School much helped by Emma and her team.

Church Team Assemblies at St Mary's School

Alternating with Open the Book the Church Team have presented assemblies on a Wednesday morning following on from the Open the Book story.

School, Beavers & Cubs Visits

Regular services for St Mary's Pre-school & School continue. Many schools and other groups visit the church over the year especially in the summer term and Christmas periods.

Sam & I visited Arunside & welcomed the school to Holy Trinity before Easter and during Advent. Greenway school also came into Holy Trinity during Advent and we hope this link will continue.

Good Friday Family Activity Morning

As usual the church was full of families colouring, gardening, praying, singing & taking part in the Easter Egg Hunt. We also held an Easter Egg Hunt after the 10am Easter Sunday service.

Summer Holiday Activities

We held one art & one drama session for Wonderful Wednesdays. We didn't have enough volunteers nor bookings for further sessions as many people are away during the summer holidays.

Christmas Nativity Service

The church was packed as usual for both Christmas Eve nativity services. Sadly Lisa was unable to be with us. However we had a good cast of children & the candles & crafts went well.

Messy Church at Holy Trinity

I have been pleased to attend and support Messy Church a couple of times this year.

Horsham Churches Together Collaborations

A team from St Mary's supported the HCT children's craft stall at Horsham District Council's July Fun Day in the park. Our interns were especially helpful during this and other events during the year.

Linda Baker

Children and Families Worker

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Choir

St. Mary's Choir is an integral part of the church and provides a valuable leadership with regards to all aspects of music within the service. As Director of Music it is my job to provide and lead the music in the church. I do this to the best of my ability but it is all the members of the choir that help me fulfill that requirement and I thank them

for their continued support and enthusiasm. We have had three new choristers move up from the junior choir and are already learning the ropes in the main choir. As a Parish church we are very lucky to have a good sized choir and produce music of the caliber we do!

2024 has been a busy year and productive year for the choir. At Christmas time we provided the music for three carol services, the Advent, Nine Lessons and Carols and the Epiphany Carol Service. Plus our usual choral evensongs and special services and concerts (Faure Requiem on Good Friday was a special concert!).

The choir trips we have had to Cathedrals has been a highlight of mine and last August we spent five days at Bristol Cathedral. This was a fantastic choir trip and the singing was of an excellent standard. The accommodation at UWE (University of Western England) was also lovely, although we had a 15/20min bus ride to get into the city! Apart from the singing it was nice to socialize and ‘bond’ as a choir. We are already planning our trip to Worcester Cathedral in 2026! It is always hard work organising these trips, and I would, again, like to thank Steve and Jo Benson who have been the main people in arranging the accommodation.

The choir would not run effectively without other key members and I would like to take this opportunity in thank the following people:-

Mike Overend, our Assistant Organist continues to provide support in all areas and without his excellent skills the choir wouldn’t be able to provide some of the performances we do!

I would also like to pay tribute to Valarie Lintott who has helped me in training some of the choristers, it has been greatly appreciated by me and the choristers themselves! A big thank you to all the ladies (and gents) who kindly feed us before choral evensongs and important occasions. Jenny Watts for keeping our robes up to date and of the right length. To our Chairman, Steve Benson and all our choir committee.

The choir do a fantastic job and the standard of singing remains generally very high. I am looking forward to continuing this for the remainder of 2025.

Jeremy Weaver  
Director of Music

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**“Deepening”**

Homegroups have continued to run well. We currently have 6 groups in operation for members of the St. Mary’s congregation – around 55 people are attending these groups, with 3 meeting during the daytime and 3 on a Monday evening. There has been some movement in the composition of the groups this year as some people have moved away but 6 newcomers to St. Mary’s have joined groups.

Anyone who provides their details to the Welcomers in church is given further information about home groups in case they would like to learn more and we receive a number of enquiries which are all followed up.

However, we are currently in a situation where all the groups (except the one which meets on a Wednesday morning in the Leslie room) are full, so it is getting difficult to accommodate new joiners. As a result, we are looking for an individual or group of people who would be prepared to host and run a new group, ideally one mid-week evening.

In Lent 2024 a Lent course was run across the Parish – this was the Church of England “Living in Love and Faith” course, which explored Christian teaching and learning around identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The Lent course for 2025 will be the Diocesan course which is a reflection on the Nicene creed and explores the core of our faith. This course will run one evening and one morning each week – details to be confirmed.

Anyone interested in joining a homegroup should email: [homegroups@horshamstmarys.org.uk](mailto:homegroups@horshamstmarys.org.uk)

If you feel able to consider setting up a new home group – please speak with one of the clergy, or you can chat informally about what is involved by contacting Linda Emery ([linda.emery@horshamstmarys.org.uk](mailto:linda.emery@horshamstmarys.org.uk))

Linda Emery  
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### **Eco Church**

Team members: Sarah Harrison, Becky Hawkins, Liz Hawkins, Richard Herrington, Chris O’Riordan, Nick O’Riordan, Gill Parsonson, Piers Pollard, Ros Pollard, Katherine Potter, Hennie Sleeman.

The team grew in 2024 and expanded to represent the whole Parish with Gill joining from Holy Trinity and Sarah from St Leonard’s. Chris was commissioned as an Authorised Lay Minister (Care of Creation) in April and also joined the team in her Parish-wide role.

Our A Rocha Bronze Eco Church Award plaque is now on display on the bookshelf at the back of church, and was kindly bought for us by Chris O’Riordan.

### **Objectives from 2024**

#### **Churchyard Management Plan**

Piers organised a site visit from Steve Tillman from Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Wilder Horsham in May, Steve has given us his report plus helpful advice. The main priority recommendations were around our mowing regime, more frequent cutting / removal of nettles and brambles, and clearance of invasive species, before longer term plans to increase diversity with native grassland plug plants. We are in contact with Horsham District Council about the mowing, and have been offered practical help by Horsham Green Gym for some clearance.

In early October we organised a Bat Evening with Huw Morgan from SWT.

#### **Fairtrade**

St Mary’s marked Fairtrade Fortnight in September with an information display in the south aisle, a film during the 10am service, and a Fairtrade cake sale which raised £218.40 for the Fairtrade Foundation. Many thanks to Becky and the Pollards for organising this event. Church teams involved in hospitality continue or have committed to choose Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance coffee, tea and sugar, enabling us to re-register as a Fairtrade Place of Worship.

#### **Support for Flower Team**

There was no Flower Festival in 2024 but some flower arrangers began using coir bags in an effort to make our floral displays for weddings more environmentally friendly. The coir bags are homemade by Nigel and Carol Stalley and are fully compostable as well as cheaper.

#### **Keeping the church community informed**

Alan Mayer preached another Eco Sermon in July which was very well received. There was an Eco Church information display after the service which also stimulated interest. Monthly Newsletters are going out more consistently.

#### **Work towards A Rocha Eco Church Silver award.**

On-going. The qualifying questionnaires were updated in November and need a fresh approach.

#### **Other items**

The Nest learning thermostats bought with a Horsham District Council grant in 2023 and installed in Parish buildings are contributing to an overall reduction in our energy use and carbon footprint.

A first Diocesan Environment Day was held at St Mark's, Holbrook, in June and was well attended by the Team.

Chris, Hennie and Gill are members of a Parish Environmental Support Network (PESN), coordinated by the new Diocesan Environmental Officer. This meets bimonthly to share information and enable churches to support each other towards their Eco Church goals. Nick is a contributing member of the Diocesan Community of Practice focused on the Church of England's "Net Zero Carbon by 2023" target.

### Objectives for 2025

1. Integrate Eco church standards into the new Mission Action Plan to enable us to progress towards A Rocha Silver Award achievement – joint work with the Leadership Team.
2. On-going work on caring for the churchyard and improving its biodiversity.
3. Support for the 2025 flower festival and efforts to create sustainable floral arrangements.
4. Another short series of talks in the spring.
5. Continued engagement with Horsham Eco Churches and Diocesan Eco Church initiatives.

Hennie Sleeman

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### English for Asylum Seekers and Ukrainians

We have had a very successful and busy year with Asylum Seekers supported in Cisswood House and Ukrainians supported at St Marys. For the Asylum Seekers English Lessons at Cisswood House in 2025 we have run about 35 weekly sessions and averaged about 30 attendances every week.

For the Ukrainians there have been weekly sessions for Beginners in the Barn on Friday afternoons. There have also been weekly Advanced sessions for Ukrainians run in the Leslie Room on Tuesday mornings.

And we've started running some remote zoom sessions for a couple of people.

We've also run some special one-off events:

- **Child Migrant Voices in February.** This event was run to support the publishing of a book by Bloomsbury and included various speakers including two Ukrainian young migrants. About 90 people attended the event.
- **Leonardslee trip in August.** We took about 60 Asylum Seekers to the gardens. The event was very well received by all who came along.
- **Prayers for Peace in November.** 8 Asylum Seekers prayed in their own language for peace in their own country and in the world. This was a well attended event with over 50 people coming along.
- **Christmas Party for Asylum Seekers at Cisswood with gifts for adults and children.** This was a popular event in which we included a short pantomime and some festive songs as well as a visit by Father Christmas.
- We have also recently facilitated an event where **Horsham Housing department** visited Cisswood to help the residents understand what the next steps will be and the constraints they will face.

We have also been able to support many individuals once they have been granted leave to remain. Activities include: moving their belongings; helping them source items they need; helping them to navigate topics such as signing up for wifi; representing them at an appeal for a school place or by just simply meeting them for coffee and listening to their concerns. We have also been able to provide some of them with laptops, mobile phones, items of luggage and clothing that has been kindly donated.

We have been delighted to support one young woman from Iran with being baptized at St Mary's and she has joined one of our housegroups. Another young woman from Iran is helping with the coffee rota

at St Mary's on Sunday mornings. Both have been given New Testaments in their mother tongue of Farsi.

We have recently heard that Horsham Refugee Support Group (HRSG) will no longer be offering English lessons at Cisswood and so our offering becomes their only opportunity to learn English which is crucial for their future. We have a very committed team of volunteers, many of whom have been there since we began our work with the Ukrainians in April 2022. Twice a year we get together to celebrate our mission and thank them for all their efforts. As people leave, more volunteers come forward and we are very grateful for all the help and support we receive from St Mary's and across the Parish.

Looking forward, our funds are somewhat depleted and none of our grant applications to date have been successful. We therefore hope to run a couple of fundraising events in 2025.

We keep remembering how tough it is for our Asylum Seekers and Refugees and our thoughts and prayers are with them as we begin a New Year. Thank you all for your support.

Sue Keegan

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### **Flower Arrangers**

I would like to thank the small group of flower arrangers who every week arrange, water and look after the flowers in our Church.

We have only 6 people on our rota and really need more if we are going to continue to look after the flowers every week. We would welcome anyone who would like to join our group - no experience necessary.

Please get in touch if you feel you can help.

Val Burgess

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### **Health and Safety**

Repairs were made to the north entrance door's retaining hooks, external brass handles installed and guidance given to all appropriate parties to ensure that they are always used at the appropriate time.

There has been ongoing communication with Horsham District Council and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) regarding the maintenance of the paving slab pathway around the church which is a public right of way. We are still waiting for the work to be carried out.

Remedial work has been carried out at the Church Centre following West Sussex Fire and Rescue recommendations.

A significant sink hole appeared in the church yard disturbing one of the tombs, this was safely taped off whilst extensive enquiries were made as to how to best deal with the incident, it was subsequently safely in-filled and poses no further risk.

A report was made to Horsham District Council regarding a large dead pine tree on the boundary line between the church and the school. This was subsequently removed in December 2024.

All accidents that occurred during the year were recorded and investigated and, where necessary, appropriate treatments given and remedial action taken. There were no major incidents in 2024.

A number of risk assessments have been approved by the PCC and put in place, predominantly relating to school visits to St. Mary's Church, the church crèche and the children and youth group's activities (both on and off site) and also relating to the asylum seekers' summer outing to Leonardslee.

Mike Watson, the new Premises Manager, took up post in March and has made a significant positive contribution to St. Mary's and across the wider parish. Mike carries out weekly Health and Safety checks in the Church and Church Centre and liaises with specialist contractors for Fire and Electrical testing.

Written on behalf of Peter Fruin  
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## **Prayer**

Prayer has continued to be the wonderful foundation of our life at St Mary's during 2024 and underpins everything we do as Christians in this place.

We pray every Sunday and have someone on a rota lead us through Intercession prayers. We have the formal prayers of the 08:00 Communion service every two weeks and we also have our 10:00 Sung Eucharistic Prayers. At Evensong we follow the formal set prayers and also have Intercession Prayers at that service too.

At the beginning of 2024 we had on the first Sunday of the month at 6pm a prayer time which was a quiet small group with a theme and we would pray, or listen to a speaker. During Easter Zoe, our Ordinand, arranged a quiet space of prayer stations of the cross, which we all found very moving and beneficial.

This time then changed to the 3rd Sunday of the month where we had an informal service, with music group, prayers and Bible study.

The All Age service has range of children writing and reading their own prayers, praying for those who need our prayers around the world at home and our families. The inclusion of the children to say 'Listen and we will hear' at parts of the Eucharistic prayer is wonderful and is so lovely to hear children's voices. Children are introduced to prayer at Sunday Club and learn how we speak to God in prayer to thank, praise and ask God to be beside us through Jesus Christ.

We have a prayer request board where people can write a request for a person for pray, then these are taken to the Altar on a Sunday where they are prayed for by the whole congregation and then also during the week, the healing Prayer team will pray for the person also.

Votive candles are lit by anyone coming into St Mary's wanting prayer for someone and it's placed on the Prayer Globe.

Prayers for visitor's. Anyone wanting prayers coming into our church can ask a Welcomer to pray with them and this does often happen.

House groups - our Home groups have time for prayers

Meetings. Our Meetings start and end with prayer

Prayer Chain - Morag our Pastoral Officer manages our prayer chain when a request comes in for prayer for someone, an email is sent out to a chain of people to all pray e.g. for someone having an operation

Healing Prayers during our service - anyone can come up for prayers to our side altar for prayers for themselves or for someone else.

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. weekly. Morning Prayers small group listen to Lectico 365 and then have a time of open prayer.

Cath Hatton  
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**Pre-School**

2024 has been a positive year and we have felt that God has provided for us with both staff and finances.

We were able to care and support a number of children with additional needs and provide places for 3 children from Cisswood House.

By the end of the summer term 2024, we had 52 children cared for by 14 staff. 25 of these children went on to 12 different local schools in September.

Although we had one member of staff who had been with us a very long time leave us, along with a very experienced SENCO, another of our long term members of staff (who was our star Spanish and music teacher!) returned to us and Bethany is now working as our trainee SENCO, having completed the Early Years Teacher Training. Stacey has now agreed to complete the EYITT qualification too.

The number of children for the Autumn Term was 40 as at 31st December 2024, with 4 more children joining us in January. We have a few afternoon sessions available for older children which we hope to fill in the coming term.

Our forest school sessions continue to be popular and help our children build resilience, problem solving skills, a love and knowledge of nature and a desire to care for it and the opportunity to feel free to run and explore.

In 2024, we restarted our intergenerational activities, inviting older people to join us in the Barn to play with the children. The number of older people is still quite low but it is very popular with the children and we hope the older people who come enjoy it too!

Karen Taylor  
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**Safeguarding**

The Parish Safeguarding Team currently consists of the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), Elizabeth Lobb, the St Mary’s Safeguarding Officer, Jude Wolstenholme, the St Mary’s Safeguarding Training Officer, Katherine Potter and the Holy Trinity Safeguarding Officer, Clare Schofield. Since the ceasing of regular Sunday services at St. Leonard’s Church, Clare has kindly stepped in to cover safeguarding issues arising from that congregation as needed. The previous PSO, Linda Goodwin



stepped down in 2024 and provided a detailed handover to the incoming PSO. This, and all her hard work whilst in the role, is greatly appreciated.

The safeguarding team met regularly during 2024. The meetings have enabled the team to support one another, to share working practices, to update on information received from the Diocese and to highlight operational issues. The PSO has attended the parochial church council (PCC) meetings, and the safeguarding team has attended their respective church committee meetings. The PSO attended drop-in sessions with the Diocesan safeguarding team and fed back pertinent information. This year, there has been an increased focus on the issue of domestic abuse within the church and volunteers across the parish have been encouraged to complete this important training.

Undertaking safeguarding training in combination with disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks are key to ensuring we have a safe & caring church. Training guidance in an easy-to-read, tabulated form detailing the training required for a variety of volunteer roles within the church has been widely circulated, and volunteers are encouraged to review their level of training on a regular basis. <https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org/trainingrequirements/>

Safeguarding and training officers continue to work hard to support volunteers in undertaking the necessary training and ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed.

A recent increase in the profile of safeguarding within the Church of England has resulted in closer collaboration between safeguarding staff, clergy and the congregation. A number of safeguarding issues have arisen since the previous AGM, several of which have been escalated to the Diocese. The team are grateful for the ongoing support of our Diocesan colleagues, clergy, operational staff and churchwardens.

Elizabeth Lobb  
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**Servers**

The serving team provides servers for all the main morning 10am Sunday services and additional services as required. We have welcomed one new team member during the last year, but also said goodbye to three servers who stepped down, so the server team supporting the 10am service now only has ten members.

The team remains very dedicated and it is through their support, enthusiastic hard work and commitment that we can help support St Mary's worship. We continue to look for new members.

The 8am service continues to be supported separately by Clive Palmart, Carol, Simon and Victoria.

Chris Button  
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## Serving the Community

Team members: Mandy Fifield, Veronica James, Hennie Sleeman, Sue Keegan, Nigel Stalley

### Objectives from 2024

#### Mission Partners in 2024

Lent – English for Ukrainians and Asylum Seekers  
Harvest gifts – Salvation Army Hope In project  
Harvest donations – Christian Blind Ministry (CBM)  
Christmas Appeal – Turning Tides  
On-going – Horsham Churches Together Foodbank  
Engineering Ministries International (EMI)  
Teach Beyond

### Mission Partners and Giving 2024

#### **Lent**

Our successful Lent Lunches raised £818.40 for work with our support work with Ukrainians and Asylum seekers. Thanks to Hennie Sleeman for organising the different teams of volunteers each week and thanks also to all those who helped out cooking soup, preparing the food, serving and clearing away afterwards.

#### **Harvest**

Our Harvest gifts of food went to the Salvation Army for their 'Hope In' project. Thanks to everyone who donated food items and to Veronica James who transported all the food to the Salvation Army. This year we organised a Family Harvest Supper on a Saturday afternoon for the first time. Thank you to Martin Dexter for cooking all the sausages and to Linda Baker for running the Children's activities. We welcomed Tim Morris from CBM who gave a short presentation in Church the Sunday before Harvest and then spoke and showed a video during the Harvest Supper. In total we raised £1,188.00 and we were able to give the money to CBM as part of the 'Big Give Christmas Challenge', which doubled our donation to £2,376.00. Thank you to all who donated and supported the event.

#### **Christmas**

Our Christmas appeal, which raised money from collections taken at our main Christmas services raised £1,310.86. This money was given to Turning Tides for their work with homeless people in West Sussex.

#### **On-going**

Donations to Horsham District foodbank have continued whenever the church building has been open; thanks are owed to Anne Banner, who has collected and taken them to Horsham Matters.

Donations continue to be collected in a box located by the North door of the church.

In July we welcomed Rob and Helen Quail to an Informal 6pm Service. They spoke about their work with Engineering Ministries International (EMI) out in Nicaragua. We gave Rob and Helen a £1,200 donation towards their work.

During the year we also gave a donation of £1,000 to Becky Hunsberger who works with Teach Beyond. Becky also spoke about her work at an Informal 6pm service.

### Mission Partners for 2025

In August 2024 our church family were invited to make suggestions for Mission Partners in 2025. These were reviewed by our team who then made a proposal to the Church Committee. The Church Committee then approved the following Mission Partners for 2025.

- Lent Lunches – Friends of Children in Romania (International)
- Focus in June – Horsham Matters (Local)
- Harvest gifts and donations – Family Support Work (Local)
- Christmas Appeal – St. Catherine’s Hospice (Local)
- Directly budgeted donations to
  - o Engineering Ministries International (Global)
  - o Teach Beyond (Global)

Details about our Mission Partners can be found in the 2025 Mission Partners booklet, available in Church. The notice board at the back of Church is regularly updated and gives details of the Mission Partners we are currently supporting.

**The Future**

During 2024 the decision was taken to stop having the Serving the Community team meetings. Instead in 2025 the St. Mary’s Church Committee will set up a small working party, for a couple of meetings only, to sort out Mission Partners for 2026. I would like to thank the team (Mandy Fifield, Veronica James, Hennie Sleeman, Sue Keegan) who have given so much time and effort to the Serving the Community team over many years.

Nigel Stalley

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**List of sidespeople,** in teams rather than alphabetical order.

Morag Gates	Alex Spence-Holey	Linda Goodwin
Margaret Hope	Richard Hope	Sue Keegan
Sue West	Jenny Holden	Carol Stalley
Nigel Stalley	Pauline Welch	Tomas Williams
Denise Herrington	Richard Herrington	Christopher Brough
Sarah Brough	Barbara Stockwell	Peter Stockwell
Delysia Hill	Maureen Muggleton	Elizabeth Hawkins
Hennie Sleeman	Joanne Kingsley-Smith	

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**Treasurer’s Report – Financial Highlights 2024**

The 2024 year-end accounts are still being finalised, but I have set out below some financial highlights relating to St Mary’s.

We expect to have a small General Fund surplus for the year of circa £5,000, which was in line with our budget, compared with an equivalent surplus of £25,000 in 2023.

- We remain heavily dependent on the generosity of our regular givers, with stewardship (and the related Gift Aid) of £193,000 representing 60% of our income in the year, although this was 5% lower than in 2023.
- Fees for weddings and funerals of £8,000 were 47% lower than 2023, with fewer weddings and funerals or memorial events (15 and 31 respectively).
- Hall, Church and car park lettings of £77,000 remain important sources of income and were 10% higher than 2023.

- We continue to benefit from the generous financial support of a small number of donors for our Youth Work, as well as a contribution from St John’s, Broadbridge Heath.
- St Mary’s benefited from a number of legacies and in memoriam donations during the year (£8,200).
- Our costs, including Worship, Mission, Administration, Church and Hall running and maintenance costs and Children and Youth work, of £188,000, although 4% higher than in 2023, were 11% below budget. In particular, our energy costs (gas and electricity) did not increase as much as expected following the end of our fixed price contact in 2023.
- We fully met the Deanery contribution target for our Parish Share of £86,000, which was 5% above the amount to cover the costs of our Clergy (stipends, pension and housing) and the wider mission of the Diocese.

We have made significant use of our Designated and Restricted Funds to pay for work, principally on the Church Centre roof (£44,000), the new kitchenette in the South Aisle (for which £10,400 was generously given in response to Lisa’s Money Sunday appeal earlier in the year) and the costs of repairing the collapsed grave in the Churchyard (£9,000).

Looking forward to 2025, we have budgeted at break even on the General Fund. Although we expect to benefit from lower energy costs, we will have to continue to monitor closely all costs during the year. With respect to the Designated and Restricted Funds, we will need to raise additional funds to pay for work recommended by the Fabric Committee arising from the Quinquennial Review and other requirements beyond 2025, and possibly earlier.

Lindsay Dart, St Mary’s Treasurer

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**Welcomers (mid-week)**

We currently have about 30 volunteer welcomers. About half volunteer on a nearly regular weekly basis, and the remainder several times per month. We manage to fill the rota most mornings from 10-1.

Saturdays are particularly problematic lately as we lost a ‘regular’, and therefore the church is not always open for the full morning due to lack of volunteers. This is a shame as I’ve noticed that the 1130/1200-1pm slot seems to be very popular with visitors and it is frequently locked early. We warmly invite anyone who might be interested in joining the team to have a chat with us.

The ChurchSuite system for managing teams and rotas works well.

Katherine Potter

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**Youth Work**

TGI’s

In 2024 we have had a good attendance at TGI’s seeing more than 40 young people each week. We have been able to grow relations with those that attend and offer them the opportunity to get to know God via youth Alpha, Café Connect, May Camp and the retreat. We also had 2 events where we invited parents to help build on these relations as well. We did a Car Wash to raise money to start to sponsor a child’s education in a developing country. We hope to have a charity sorted in early 2025. We also

enjoyed time outside doing combat archery, games in the woods and youth group till midnight. We have tried to create an environment to allow young people to feel safe and welcome.

## Café Connect

This year we have seen new young people join us in our youth service. We have regularly seen Warnham and St Johns' youth join us. We have had guest speakers talking about prayer and being the salt and light. We have tried to create a space that offers a different style of worship and teaching than what is already on offer. We have food together and hope for it to be a place of fellowship and the Holy Spirit. We had numbers up 20+ however we do have a core group of about 8 that attend each month. We hope to include a few other youth groups in 2025.

## Boys' group

In 2024 we started a boys' group. This was to keep engagement with the year 9+ boys as they started to focus on school work and other commitments. We attended bowling, Airsoft and went for food. We hope to build a good supporting community for boys to open up and have a safe space to be who they are in the world. We are also starting to see this group have a bigger impact on our youth system. The boys seem to argue less and come together at TGI's, May camp and the retreat.

## Girls' group

The girls' group started for the same reason as the boys' group. It was also to give them a space away from the boys, who regularly annoyed them at camp and youth group. It's a lovely and a well-established group of girls. However, with them getting older and studying more it has been hard to keep them engaged. As we move into 2025 we hope to find a way to keep them engaged with the youth work. This has seen us attend an escape room, mini golf, Christmas shopping and food out. We have had up to 13 attendees during some activities.

## The core

The Core is slowly growing and starting to create a community. As we are starting to see the same young people each week, this is allowing them to build a rapport with each other. We hope as they grow older and closer to each other we can create a thriving space for prayer and journeying through life together. We have also been able to introduce other people to lead which has allowed variety for the young people. On average we expect to see 5-6 young people joining each week in the Core.

## Millais

I have continued to attend Millais Secondary offering a lunchtime club on Fridays. This has been good, engaging with 15-20 young people each week. Some we have in our youth system, some interested and some we are getting to know. This has built a good rapport with the school where they have asked me to help with the CU and help in the inclusion department.

## Duke of Edinburgh

In 2024 we saw 4 Silvers complete their Silver DofE award. Our sign ups for 2024-2025 are at 12 young people for Bronze. We are super excited to engage with these young people and get to know them better. Some of the young people who have signed up haven't engaged in anything other than TGI's. This is a brilliant opportunity to show the spiritual side of DofE and build rapport with these young people.

## May Camp

We saw 32 young people attend May camp in 2024 which was 13 more than 2023. We were able to get a good group of year 6's join us through the youth alpha course we ran. May camp was enjoyed by all and a few young people experiencing a different style of worship and Church. It allows us to invite those from TGI's to start a journey with God. This year we saw our youth get to the finals of the volleyball tournament, participation on the talent show and engaging with the main stage talk and events. We were also able to give our interns a big insight into how May Camp is run and organised. They had a big say in what happened and offered new ways to bring Jesus into their lives.

## Satellites

We attended Satellites this year for the second year in a row. We took 7 young people. 3 who weren't sure what to expect but fully loved being there and even got into the swing of praying for each other. We heard amazing testimonies from a leader in America who worked with gangsters and the transformation he saw in them through Jesus. We heard from the Archbishop who opened up about his faith. We attended seminars about how we hear God, how he meets us where we are and more. We didn't do so well in the volleyball tournament, dressed up and danced as Disney characters and had late night doughnuts.

## October retreat

After two successful retreats we pushed the boat out to attend a bigger venue. This worked out really well. It was a blessing to be there with our youth. We had worship, prayer, seminars and all things God. We ate together, remembered the sacrifice Jesus made and created community. Words cannot describe how proud and emotional I was at seeing them come together on the retreat. We had one or two unsure about taking part in the talent show. Regardless all the youth gave everyone a standing ovation. It was a safe place where no youth were judging each other. We had several guest speakers cover topics about hearing from God, Agapy, the Trinity and how we pray. We had 20 attendees this year which once again included Warnham youth.

## Youth Alpha

We ran a youth alpha course which saw eight Year 6's attend from St Mary's Primary. They first attended due to the pizza, games and their friends - however, by the end they loved the videos and enjoyed the group's atmosphere. During the course a girl mentioned how she loved praying for people but there is never time. We started to pray for one another. The young people enjoyed praying for each other and became the main point of our time together. So much so that after the course we did a 24/7 prayer course with them. This also went well and this was able to transition into May camp.

## Lee Buck

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