

ST MARY'S NORTHCHURCH

REGISTERED CHARITY 1130418



ANNUAL REPORTS 2018/2019

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TRUSTEES REPORT

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST MARY'S NORTHCHURCH

Registered Charity Number 1130418

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

Incumbent: Reverend Canon Jonathan Gordon

Office Address: Parish Office
Rectory Lane
Northchurch
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 3QN

Independent Examiner: Shaun Brownsmith
Haines Watts
Claridge Court, 4 Lower Kings Rd
Berkhamsted
HP4 2AF

Bankers: NatWest Bank
199 High Street
Berkhamsted
HP4 1BH

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Introduction

St Mary's Northchurch is one of the oldest churches in Hertfordshire and situated on the A4251 Northchurch High Street. At weekends, the church has the use of the adjacent playground of St Mary's Northchurch Primary School for car parking, access to which is off New Road.

St Mary's is linked with St Bartholomew's church in Wigginton to form a United Benefice. Once a month we hold a combined evening service at one of the churches.

Aims and Purposes

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a body corporate governed by the PCC Powers Measure 1956 and Church Representation Rules 2011.

The principle aims of the PCC are to serve the local community by:

- Providing a full programme of public Christian worship
- Teaching the Christian faith
- Encouraging and enabling the local community to worship at the church and become members of the church community
- Providing appropriate pastoral care within the local community
- Promoting whole pastoral, evangelistic, ecumenical and social missions of the Church of England

The PCC is also responsible for the maintenance of the church, the parish rooms and 98 High Street.

The PCC is a Public Benefit Entity within the meaning of Financial Reporting Standard 102, and it has regard for the Charity for the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and in particular the specific guidance on the advancement of religion.

The PCC believes that during the year it has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Following the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation in May 2018 the PCC approved a new Privacy Notice which is available via the church website.

The PCC met six times during the year and the Standing Committee met twice. During the year, a number of sub-committees were formed to deal with specific aspects of church life, with the sub-committees reporting back to the main body of the PCC. The new sub-committees include a Finance Committee, a Fabric Committee and a Social Committee. A Standing Committee consisting of the Incumbent, Church Wardens, Treasurer and Secretary deals with urgent items which arise between the scheduled PCC meetings.

PCC members who have served during 2018 until the date this report was approved at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) are as follows:

Incumbent: Reverend Canon Jonathan Gordon

Churchwardens: Evelyn Hodgson
David Sayers

Other PCC Members: Heidi Baker
Giles Batchelor
Gill Bugg
Andrew Dobbie
Margit Dobbie
Brian Hodgson
Jackie Jones
Doreen Knapp (ex officio)
Nick Laing
Linda Lunn
Emma McCann (Treasurer)
Richard North (PCC Secretary)
Rosemary North
Gareth Pritchard
Marilyn Pryor
Clare Sayers
Peggy Sear (ex officio)
Emma Upstone

Deanery Synod: Karen Baldwin
Nick Bugg
Rosemary North

Achievements and Performance

2018-2019 has been a particularly busy and eventful year in the life of St Mary's church, which has kept the church at the centre of village life.

Currently we have scaffolding surrounding the church. Anyone living in the village for some time will no doubt be aware that for at least five years we have been fundraising to replace the leaking lead covering on the church roof with a new covering of terne-coated steel. We have now raised sufficient money, which together with legacies has enabled this long-overdue work to start. Work will be completed by Easter.

During the year, we have held a social event most months, ranging from a "Call my Quaff" quiz game in March to a soup kitchen in May in aid of Christian Aid. We had hot cross buns on Good Friday, an Easter egg hunt on Easter Saturday, then a sausage sizzler for St George's day in April. Terry Waite gave the Deanery Lecture in May, then June saw us embarking on a coach trip to Hereford cathedral in conjunction with our sister-church in Wigginton. During the build-up to the annual church fête

there was a general tidy-up of the churchyard and surrounding area. The fête raised funds for three charities, the roof fund together with a local charity and an overseas mission. July also saw us enjoying cream teas in the Rectory garden entertained by The *Gillybillies* and a singer's workshop and evening entertainment in the church. During August, the Parish Room paintwork was redone, along with a deep clean of the chairs and radiator grills.

The sponsored Bike 'n Hike cycle ride, organised by the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust during September, was followed by the Harvest supper and quiz and the Happy Wanderers tea in October, the Christmas bazaar in November and the annual Crisis at Christmas lunch in December. In January we held a traditional Burns Night Supper, where we had a great deal of fun singing and dancing as well as enjoying a hearty meal together. February saw our very own missionary, Claire Hodgson, return for a month to update us on her work in the Dominican Republic, followed by a roast dinner and a question-and-answer session about her life and work.

On Wednesday afternoons, between March and October, we have had the church open every week for companionship, tea, coffee and cake. Once the work on the new roof is complete we aim to have the church open on a daily basis during daytime hours. With this in mind, security cameras and further security equipment were installed inside the church. The clock and organ have been maintained and a music festival is being planned for July.

The Christmas services were well attended this year. Sunday clubs run most Sundays for the younger members of the congregation, and toys are provided in the Lady Chapel for younger children who are too young for Sunday club. For older children, the Friday night sessions have been restored for the *Lighthouse* youth group.

The redesigned church website www.stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk has reached wider into the local community which, together with the church's Facebook page, has kept the local and wider communities updated on events and activities at St Mary's.

During the year at St Mary's there were 5 weddings, 1 Blessing, 9 funerals, 2 memorial services, 18 baptisms and 12 burial of ashes.

A new Electoral Roll came into force on 7th April 2019 and contains 125 names.

Financial Report 2018

Summary:

I am pleased to be able to report that 2018 was a good year financially for St. Mary's, with a total surplus of £21,985, income over expenditure, at year end. Our parish share was, once again, paid in full and on time and due to the continued hard work of the fundraising teams and others we were, as the year drew to a close, able to look forward to commencing the work on the church roof.

Income:

2018 saw an increase in voluntary Income of over 20% due, in the main, to an increase in donation and legacy income. Following a couple of years of reduction in planned giving, ie monies given by standing order and the regular envelopes scheme it is encouraging to see this increasing by almost 6% during 2018.

Events and Activities income was once again strong and the efforts of the fete committee, as well as Jill and Emily's contributions on the magazine advertising and parish room bookings respectively, are owed thanks for this.

Whilst the total of "other income" was down on the previous year this was, in the main, due to the reduction in roof fund income as we neared our target. We did, however, see a significant increase in rental income on 98 High Street as we were able to secure tenants following the works completed last year.

Expenditure:

As in previous years, the largest expenditure for 2018 was the Parish share paid to the Diocese which amounted to £53,286. Charitable giving increased as did the fees paid to the Diocese for weddings and funerals as we saw an increase in these events.

There appears to be an increase of almost 36% in church running costs, but we did receive a significant refund from our previous supplier of gas, so the actual increase is closer to 16% which, whilst still significant, is not a cause for concern.

Going Forward:

The roof work has begun in earnest and we know that over the coming months expenditure is sure to exceed income significantly. Hopefully 2019 will bring a continued increase in planned giving and I am sure that the fundraising efforts will continue too. This should ensure that our cashflow allows us to continue to support charities and foundations in both the UK and abroad as well as supporting our church and allowing us to pay our parish share.

I could not fulfil my role without the continued support and assistance of other members of the PCC and the congregation and I am especially grateful to Nick and Gill Bugg.

Emma McCann

Independent Examiner's report to the
Parochial Church Council of the St Mary's Church, Northchurch

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018 which are set out on the following pages.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

As trustees of the charity, the members of the PCC are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- Follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention.

1. Which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - To keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
 - To prepare accounts which accord with these accounting records have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding to be reached.

Except that, the accounts are not exactly in the prescribed format as per the guidance produced by the Business Committee of the General Synod – PCC Accountability 5th Edition and attention to the Statement of Assets and Liabilities (Balance Sheet) split between Unrestricted, Restricted and the Endowment Funds and accompanying notes needs to be considered for future accounts.

Haines Watts

Shaun Brownsmith FCA
Haines Watts
4 Claridge Court
Lower Kings Road
Berkhamsted
HP4 2AF
22nd March 2019

Northchurch Parochial Church Council
Year ended 31 December 2018

| | 2018 | | | | |
|---|----------------|---------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Unrestricted | Designated | Restricted | Total | 2017 |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Receipts | | | | | |
| Voluntary Income | | | | | |
| Planned Income | 44,891 | 0 | 0 | 44,891 | 44,489 |
| Cash Collections | 4,091 | 0 | 0 | 4,091 | 3,546 |
| Income Tax Recovered | 13,046 | 0 | 0 | 13,046 | 10,524 |
| | 62,028 | 0 | 0 | 62,028 | 58,560 |
| Other Voluntary Income | | | | | |
| Specific Legacies | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Donations/Legacies (inc HRH Duke of Cornwall) | 13,953 | 10 | 0 | 13,963 | 4,274 |
| Special Collections / Donations | 0 | 737 | 0 | 737 | 928 |
| Rector's fees | 4,842 | 0 | 0 | 4,842 | 3,322 |
| PCC fees | 4,473 | 0 | 0 | 4,473 | 3,813 |
| Organist's fees | 850 | 0 | 0 | 850 | 1,000 |
| Bellringers' fees | 720 | 0 | 0 | 720 | 586 |
| Verger's fees | 309 | 0 | 0 | 309 | 413 |
| | 25,147 | 747 | 0 | 25,894 | 14,337 |
| Events and Activities | | | | | |
| Summer Fete | 0 | 5,865 | 0 | 5,865 | 5,415 |
| Magazine Advertising Income | 4,840 | 0 | 0 | 4,840 | 4,827 |
| Printing Income | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Parish Room Hire | 4,578 | 0 | 0 | 4,578 | 4,826 |
| Church Lunches | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Historic Churches Cycle Ride | 0 | 656 | 0 | 656 | 683 |
| Social Activities | 504 | 584 | 0 | 1,088 | 305 |
| | 9,922 | 7,105 | 0 | 17,025 | 16,055 |
| Other Income | | | | | |
| Bank Interest | 28 | 0 | 0 | 28 | 4 |
| Dividends | 300 | 0 | 0 | 300 | 294 |
| C B F Interest | 274 | 0 | 0 | 274 | 244 |
| Donald Lockhart Memorial Fund | 5,418 | 0 | 0 | 5,418 | 5,304 |
| Northchurch Development Fund | 96 | 0 | 0 | 96 | 54 |
| Diocese contribution to repairs | 400 | 0 | 0 | 400 | 250 |
| Church running costs refund (CNG and Eon) | 2,622 | 0 | 0 | 2,622 | 208 |
| UNP cheques | 66 | 0 | 0 | 66 | 0 |
| Church 123 refund | 216 | 0 | 0 | 216 | 0 |
| Rent for 98 High Street | 11,358 | 0 | 0 | 11,358 | 6,200 |
| Organ Restoration Fund | 0 | 1,942 | 0 | 1,942 | 1,172 |
| Building Fund Income | 0 | 15,577 | 0 | 15,577 | 36,212 |
| Youth Worker / Youth Group Funding | 0 | 750 | 0 | 750 | 385 |
| Choir / Music | 0 | 576 | 0 | 576 | 709 |
| Kneeler Funds | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 |
| | 20,778 | 18,845 | 0 | 39,624 | 51,077 |
| Total Receipts | 117,875 | 26,697 | 0 | 144,572 | 140,029 |

| | 2018 | | | TOTAL £ | 2017 £ |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Unrestricted £ | Designated £ | Restricted £ | | |
| Payments | | | | | |
| Grants | | | | | |
| Overseas Missions and Relief Agencies | 455 | 0 | 0 | 455 | 2,069 |
| UK Missions and Relief Agencies | 6,442 | 0 | 0 | 6,442 | 1,756 |
| | 6,897 | 0 | 0 | 6,897 | 3,826 |
| Relating to the Work of the Church | | | | | |
| Diocesan Quota | 53,286 | 0 | 0 | 53,286 | 54,287 |
| Rector's fees paid to Diocese | 4,842 | 0 | 0 | 4,842 | 3,322 |
| Church Running Expenses | 17,711 | 0 | 0 | 17,711 | 13,038 |
| Clergy Expenses | 3,073 | 0 | 0 | 3,073 | 2,821 |
| Service & License Costs | 2,030 | 0 | 0 | 2,030 | 1,370 |
| Youth Worker Salary | 1,870 | 0 | 0 | 1,870 | 5,885 |
| Honoraria | 1,525 | 0 | 0 | 1,525 | 1,617 |
| Organist | 1,555 | 0 | 0 | 1,555 | 2,265 |
| Churchyard | 605 | 0 | 0 | 605 | 1,459 |
| Magazine | 5,280 | 0 | 0 | 5,280 | 5,280 |
| Printing | 1,150 | 0 | 0 | 1,150 | 270 |
| Organ Maintenance | 700 | 0 | 0 | 700 | 295 |
| Verger Fees | 2,642 | 0 | 0 | 2,642 | 2,241 |
| Bellringers' fees | -586 | 0 | 0 | -586 | 586 |
| Organist's Service Fees | 100 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| Other Expenditure | 1,341 | 0 | 0 | 1,341 | 1,074 |
| Fundraising Costs (incl Fete & Social Activities) | 20 | 1,611 | 0 | 1,631 | 1,561 |
| Sunday School Expenses | 140 | 0 | 0 | 140 | 73 |
| Youth Work Expenses | 378 | 0 | 0 | 378 | 133 |
| Traidcraft Purchases | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kneeler Funds Expenses | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C B F Interest Reinvested | 370 | 0 | 0 | 370 | 298 |
| Independent Examination | 150 | 0 | 0 | 150 | 0 |
| | 98,182 | 1,611 | 0 | 99,793 | 97,874 |
| Maintenance Costs | | | | | |
| Major Capital Expenditure | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 98 High Street | 6,010 | 0 | 0 | 6,010 | 5,621 |
| Buildings Maintenance | 9,635 | 0 | 0 | 9,635 | 8,876 |
| Parish Room | 252 | 0 | 0 | 252 | 283 |
| | 15,897 | 0 | 0 | 15,897 | 14,780 |
| Total Payments | 120,976 | 1,611 | 0 | 122,587 | 116,480 |

| Charity/Fund Title | Account No. | No. Shares | Value per Share | Dividend/ Interest | Value of Fund at 31/12/18 |
|---|-------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>National Westminster Bank</u> | | | | | £169,487.78 |
| <u>With St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance</u> | | | | | |
| Northchurch Development Fund | 132001842D | | | £95.86 reinvested | £19,387.00 |
| Donald Lockhart Memorial Fund | 132001875S | | | £5,418.31 | £160,601.11 |
| <u>With Central Board of Finance of the Church of England</u> | | | | | |
| Fixed Interest Securities Fund | 632008001F | | | £187.57 reinvested | £4,669.54 |
| Deposit Fund | 632008001D | | | £86.80 reinvested | £17,556.03 |
| <u>COIF Charity Funds</u> | | | | | |
| Wagstaff Trust Income Fund | C0000403186 | | | £0.00 | £54.02 |
| Hadden Trust Income Fund | C0000403185 | | | £0.00 | £40.00 |
| Bailey Charity | 282190001T | 18 | £11.97 | £8.96 | £258.49 |
| Ridley for Church Fabric Fund | 282190002T | 56 | £11.97 | £27.91 | £804.20 |
| Ridley for Churchyard Fund | 282190004T | 56 | £11.97 | £27.91 | £804.20 |
| Michael Memorial fabric Fund | 282190003T | 58 | £11.97 | £28.90 | £832.93 |
| Gwynedd Charity | 282190005T | 89 | £11.97 | £44.35 | £1,278.11 |
| Thelwall Trust for Churchyard Upkeep | 282190006T | 89 | £11.97 | £44.35 | £1,278.11 |
| A Ashley | 282190007T | 32 | £11.97 | £15.94 | £459.55 |
| C B Kings Children for Churchyard | 282190008T | 15 | £11.97 | £7.48 | £215.41 |
| Randall Memorial Foreign Mission | 268810000T | 62 | £11.97 | £30.90 | £890.37 |
| Browne Charity | 332730001T | 128 | £11.97 | £63.77 | £1,838.18 |
| | | | | | £8,753.57 |
| | | | | | £380,455.03 |

Balance Sheet (Statement of Assets and Liabilities)

| | 2018 | 2017 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £ | £ |
| Cash at bank | 169,488 | 157,054 |
| Investments | 210,967 | 213,493 |
| | <u>380,455</u> | <u>370,547</u> |
| Accruals | - 1,165 | - 10,716 |
| | <u>379,290</u> | <u>359,831</u> |
| Represented by: | | |
| Funds brought forward | 359,831 | 321,377 |
| Surplus of income over expenditure | 21,985 | 23,550 |
| Loss on investments | - 2,526 | 14,904 |
| | <u>379,290</u> | <u>359,831</u> |

Trustee Report and Accounts for 2018 were approved on behalf of the PCC at the Standing Committee at its meeting on 29th March 2019

Jonathan Gordon

Rev'd. Canon Jonathan Gordon, Chairman

Dated:

29/3/2019

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2018-2019 has been a particularly busy and eventful year in the life of St Mary's church, but we would like to begin our report by thanking the clergy team, Jonathan, Michael, Doreen, Peggy and David for their hard work, love and dedication to our Northchurch community. We greatly appreciate their input to village, church and community life. We would also like to thank Rachel for her leadership of the music group and for being so wonderfully welcoming to all comers in her garden for the church fête, as well as other church and village social events. The musical life of the church continues apace, with many thanks to our organist and choir leader Jenny Hoare. We welcome Peach Berry as our youth leader.

Most of you will, by now, have noticed the scaffolding all around the church. If you have lived in the village for more than a few weeks you will no doubt be aware that we have been fundraising to raise the money to replace the leaking lead covering on the church roof for at least five years. We thank you and the school community for your forbearance in what has been a rather messy job, which should be completed by the end of the Easter school holidays.

There have been a great number of exciting events laid on by various members of the church community to achieve our goal and it has been a very great privilege to be involved in this monumental achievement for our beautiful grade 1 listed building. From fundraising to liaising with the architect and roofers, organising a bat survey, and engaging an archaeologist to supervise the work and log and record anything of interest which was uncovered when the old lead has been taken off, it has been an interesting experience, which is not likely to be repeated within any of our lifetimes as the newterne-coated steel roof, should last many years. It has the great advantage that it is not easily removed and has no market value to thieves who have stolen roofing lead from many of our neighbouring churches. So many people have contributed to the fundraising by buying "bricks" or roofing tiles, bells for tower etc towards the wonderful scale model made by Andrew Dobbie that many thousands of pounds have been raised. If you have not seen the model, be sure to come to the ACM, when it will be on display.

If you would like to come to any future events please do check the website regularly and read the Parish magazine and pew sheets to find out what we are planning so that you can come and join in. You will be very welcome. Remember, the church is part of your heritage and a vital asset to our community.

In the last year we have had a social event most months, ranging from a "Call my Quaff" quiz game in March to a soup kitchen in May in aid of Christian Aid. We had hot cross buns on Good Friday, an Easter egg hunt on Easter Saturday, then a sausage sizzler for St George's day in April. Terry Waite gave the Deanery Lecture in May, then June saw us embarking on a coach trip to Hereford cathedral, organised by Michael Eggleton. During the build-up to the church fête there was a grounds tidying and hedge trimming session.

The church fête was ably led by Margit Dobbie and her team, and it raised funds for three charities, one of which was, of course, the roof. The other two were a local charity and an overseas mission. July also saw us enjoying cream teas in Jonathan and Rachel's garden entertained by *The Gillybillies* and a singer's workshop and evening entertainment in the church. During August the Parish Room paintwork was redone, along with a deep clean of the chairs and radiator grills, (not very exciting, but essential maintenance work).

The sponsored Bike 'n Hike cycle ride in September was followed by the Harvest supper and quiz and the Happy Wanderers tea in October, the Christmas bazaar in November and the annual Crisis at Christmas lunch in December.

If you have not looked at the website lately we would urge you to take a look at the photographs of the Burns Night Supper, where we had a great deal of fun singing and dancing as well as enjoying a hearty meal together. February saw our very own missionary, Claire Hodgson, return for a month to update us on her work in the Dominican Republic, followed by a roast dinner and a question-and-answer session about her life and work.

On Wednesday afternoons between March and October we have had the church open every week for companionship, tea, coffee and cake. (Please see the report from Charlotte Pritchard).

Fabric

There has been a focus this year on trying to maintain and preserve the grounds and buildings without much expense as the main focus has been on saving up for the roof work, but a few jobs have been completed, including tidying grounds and hedge trimming. Fallen trees have been removed and new fencing has been installed round the steps and doorway to the boiler house. The grass has been cut regularly.

Security cameras and further security equipment have been installed inside the church.

The clock and organ have been maintained. We are delighted to report that the Diocese was persuaded to help us with the cost of repairing some very substantial potholes in Rectory Drive, making that safer for people to walk to the Parish rooms and to school.

It is hoped to move towards our Mission Action Plan of having the church open as soon as the roof work has been completed.

Mission Action Plan

The organ has been securely covered in order to prevent ingress of dirt from the roof whilst it is being repaired. Permission has been given by the Venerable Jonathan Smith, Archdeacon of St Albans, for the solenoids to be replaced as those which were installed 20 years ago are showing signs of wear and tear and cannot be relied upon to work properly. When this work has been done, Jenny Hoare has plans to arrange a music festival in July. Visiting organists will be invited to play.

The Christmas services were well attended this year. Sunday clubs run most Sundays for the younger members of the congregation, and toys are provided in the Lady Chapel for younger children who are too young for Sunday club. Friday night sessions have been restored for the *Lighthouse* youth group under the leadership of Peach Berry and the Sears and Hodgsons have started to refurbish the loft for their use. This will include some fire-retardant seating and some computer games. If anyone has a spare large screen television which is in good working order that could be used for games, please let Peach know.

Lastly, please accept our thanks for everything that you do for the church and the church community. There are so many people who beaver away behind the scenes, never asking for praise or glory, but without whom this church would be a much poorer place. If you have a talent or a skill that you would like share with us, whether it be baking a cake for the church fête, polishing brasses, cutting the grass, or trimming the yew hedge, please do get in touch via the website or in person on a Sunday morning after the ten o'clock service.

Evelyn Hodgson and David Sayers

David Sayers

By now you will be aware that David has made the decision not to seek re-election as church warden following 13 years of devotion to the church. During his time as church-warden he has been instrumental in most of the decisions that have been made and we thank him most sincerely for his dedicated service. He deserves a well-earned rest, but has kindly agreed to remain on the PCC to

continue to guide and mentor us all, including his replacement. He has also voiced his intention to apply to join the governing body of the school.

We thank him for the many and various tasks that he has completed, including taking the role of safeguarding officer and creating the Mission Action Plan. He has been pivotal in managing the various properties owned or managed by the church and his input will be missed.

Thank you, David.

Evelyn Hodgson

CHILDREN'S CLUB & CRECHE

A feature of Sunday Club over the last year or so has been the fluctuating numbers - some weeks we can have just one or two children, other weeks we can have ten or more. Holiday Sundays often seem to be as busy as those in the term time. Another feature of Sunday Club is how truly delightful the children who attend are; the rest of the congregation get a glimpse when we come back into the service and tell you what we have been doing; we teachers get to enjoy a longer time with them and their funny comments, their wise comments, and quite often, their very impressive Bible knowledge. So thank you, parents, who bring your children to church. It is often not the easiest thing to do on a Sunday. You are giving them the opportunity to make their own mind up about the God who loves them and the Saviour who died for them in a country where most children won't be offered that chance. We will do our best to teach them, excite them and amaze them with the truth of that God and that Saviour. And in the meantime, we will do a great Nativity, lots of craft, quite a bit of acting and have a lot of fun.

And thank you Sunday Club and Crèche team. Having trialled having all the children together for a term we have now decided to split back into two age groups and are delighted to have enough helpers to do so. But we would always welcome more!

Penny Coase

YOUTH WORK

For the Lighthouse youth team, this year has consolidated many of the foundations set up over the last ten years within the youth work. It has been a year of many blessings and fulfilled hopes.

In September, Robert Pain returned to university, leaving questions over how the Lighthouse youth ministry would continue. I, together with a team of amazing people met to pray and discuss what a future vision for the Lighthouse ministry would look like, given that it was no longer possible to afford a youth minister (part-time or full-time). Hence, a Youth framework was put together that gave structure and purpose to the youth work, in a way that would enable it to continue in years to come. A large part of this is to invest in our youth for the future, so that as they find a sense of belonging within the Lighthouse youth group, they will be able to instil in those children coming up through the Sunday school a sense of what it is to have a faith, as well as a place to call 'church', within the wider St. Mary's church community. As a result of this framework, I and a small team set about prioritising what we could provide in terms of weekly meetings, activities and events.

The Lighthouse youth now meets every Friday. We have about ten young people who regularly attend, ranging from year 7 to year 13. Last term, the programme included an hour of 'chill' and chat, followed by an hour of Bible study/group discussion. This term the programme includes guest speakers coming in to share their life journeys from spiritual and testimonial angles. Each week, the young people and team have built on relationships and fun and it is clear that we have a bunch of inspiring young people.

In addition, I try to organise a monthly attendance at a Sunday evening service, which allows the youth and leaders to worship together. We have attended the St. Albans Advent evening service, as well as a few Soul Survivor and Northchurch Baptist Church Sunday evening services. This summer a small team will take a few of the youth to Soul Survivor. This is an annual summer camp organised by Soul Survivor and as it is the last camp offered in its current format, the youth who attended last year were keen to go this year. I have finally agreed to take a group of the young people (about eight) to Soul Survivor with the kind help and support of Iain Berry, Penny Coase and Immy Laing. Many thanks to them.

As our youth continue to mature spiritually, we will seek to develop the Lighthouse Youth framework and programme, in order to further the spiritual journeys of our young people.

I am so grateful for the support of Jonathan Gordon, the PCC, the Smoult Trust and members of our church (Andrea, Penny, Nick, Sarah, James, Rachel to name a few) and it is so good to be able to provide a youth group for our inspiring youth.

Peach Berry

CHURCH MUSIC

Music continues to play a central part in the life of St Mary's and perhaps it was more than appropriate that our summer choral concert was Handel's Messiah. We were delighted to welcome Richard King as choral director, Richard Carr as organist and 56 singers from the area. There were some notable 'sectional' solos and Madalina Tudoran wowed the audience with the soprano solo 'Rejoice greatly'. There was an equally uplifting performance of the Hallelujah chorus involving both choir and audience. As always, the excellent St Mary's hospitality was enjoyed by all.

The organ continues to cause concern, but with roof repairs underway and the relevant permissions granted, work on the console should take place in 2019. This should deal with the current electrical issues – we just need to fix the 12 bottom notes on one of the pedal stops!

The choir was sad to wave farewell to Bill Frew as he and Anne departed for Guildford to be nearer their family. While we have not recruited new singers, we are delighted that Gareth is back with us, singing, directing the choir and playing the organ – a most able and willing deputy and a great encourager within the choir.

Members of the choir have contributed at the sung Eucharists, but also played a full part at major festivals during the year and worked extremely hard to produce lovely performances of 'O radiant dawn' at the Advent carol service and 'Mater ora filium' at Christmas. The

ladies seemed to particularly enjoy the Christmas descants. Several of the choir also sang at weddings in St Mary's and St Bartholomew's in Wigginton and also at special services in Ashridge chapel.

The choir is not robed and we don't process, but we do take pride in what we do. We welcome 'enquirers' to our rehearsals – do come and give us a try. Although it can help if you read music, there are plenty of ways of learning and you are assured of a warm welcome. The door is open - (via south transept – Friday 6.30pm)

I am grateful to Clare Wille who continues to keep track of our growing library of music and Roger Bowley who has taken on an increasing amount of organ playing with great competence. I am also grateful to Clare Sayers and Valerie Clark in helping to choose hymns Sunday by Sunday. If you would like to contribute thoughts and ideas on the music, please contact me either at church or via the website e mail: music@stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk

Jenny Hoare

MUSIC GROUP

The St Mary's Music Group continues to lead the worship for family services about eight times per year. We lost three long-standing members to university last September, but have gained two new young members who have both passed their Grade 1 violin and an experienced clarinet player has also joined us. We usually number about 10 – 12 and enjoy playing some of the modern hymns and songs from the hymnbook. Instruments include piano, violin, double bass, clarinets and oboe. New members are always welcome.

A new initiative since Peach Berry took over running the Lighthouse youth group has been to have a meeting in the Lockhart Room after the family services each month for the young people who are members of the music group. Cake is provided and we usually read the Bible, pray, chat on a topic related to Christianity and sometimes play games too. It has been enjoyed so far and meets the needs of the young people who are not able to attend Lighthouse on a Friday evening.

Rachel Gordon

STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

Have you considered updating your way of financially contributing to the Church recently? Are you still finding cash to put in, when the plate comes round during services? There are ways we can make it more convenient for your situation.

A declared commitment to making your donations Gift Aided, is preferable to make sure we can reclaim the maximum Gift Aid on your donations. Whichever way you choose to donate, there are four donation methods available, as shown below.

Standing Order

This is the ideal way as it allows the Stewardship Secretary and Treasurer to see exactly what amount they can guarantee will be donated. This can be used with or without having signed a Gift Aid declaration. To initiate this there is a form on the back of the last pew.

Weekly Stewardship Scheme (Boxed Brown Numbered Envelopes)

This envelope has a number assigned to you and dated for each Sunday throughout the year for you to put your cash/cheque in and which you can put into the collection plate during the service. The scheme includes committing to a financial value which you are able to afford. It can be used with or without having signed a Gift Aid declaration.

White Envelope Scheme

This envelope has been provided for those who wish to contribute cash of whatever value, on a regular basis (if not weekly) who don't want to fill in the Blue Gift Aid envelopes every time they attend. An individual scheme number is assigned upon starting this scheme.

Gift Aid Envelopes (Blue Un-numbered Envelopes)

These are found at the end of the pews and are specifically there for income tax payers wishing to contribute cash to the collection. THERE IS NO POINT IN USING THEM WITHOUT SIGNING THE DECLARATION AND PROVIDING YOUR ADDRESS.

To join any of the first three schemes, please contact Nick Laing (01442 873 629) or email: alslaing@aol.com.

Nick Laing

WEDNESDAY EVENING FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Both the House Groups meet on alternate Wednesdays; at ours we have enjoyed Emma's kind hospitality (wine, tea and a range of interesting crisps) for another year and had some great studies and fellowship.

Hebrews 4: 12 says 'for the Word of God is alive and active' and it never fails to amaze me that when we spend more than a few fleeting minutes reading the Bible, just how much we get out of it. Our group made slow progress through an overview of the Old Testament last year but we learned so much! All those stories one knows from childhood were joined together for us and put into the context of God saving his chosen people, and how they point to what God then does, hundreds of years later, in Jesus. Now we are revisiting the Easter story and again fresh things jump out all the time. Add to that being able to share doubts, worries, questions, about faith and life in general, with a small group, and you can understand why we keep meeting, year after year. We are all busy, some weeks we have to cancel, sometimes people cannot come for a while. But when we can, it is so worthwhile. Consider joining us...

Penny Coase

The Wednesday evening fellowship group (originally on a Thursday) continues to meet at the home of Clare Price, from 8pm onwards, on alternate weeks. We are usually about six to

eight in number and we meet to share in a time of fellowship, prayer and Bible study, as well as an opportunity to share and support one another in our Christian journeys.

Over the last year we have used Bible study material that focused on exploring the Bible Characters in the Old Testament. Being able to connect favourite Bible Characters to the timeline of the Bible narrative, was illuminating. Currently, we are reading the book 'The Jesus I never knew' by Philip Yancey, and exploring each chapter in greater depth, as we read session by session.

A typical Wednesday evening will start with refreshments, cheerful banter, Bible/book study, discussions, with the evening ending in a time of reflection, prayer and worship.

Peach Berry, Rachel Gordon

BERKHAMSTED DEANERY SYNOD

Rosemary North, Gareth Pritchard and Nick Bugg were the St Mary's representatives on the Berkhamsted and Tring Deanery Synod.

The meeting on 24 May 2018 with Terry Waite at Egerton Rothsay School sold out. He gave an interesting talk on his time in captivity in the Middle East and explained that his books came out of his thoughts during this time.

The barn dance at Northchurch Social Centre on 16 June 2018 was very well attended.

On 9 October Tim Lomax, Director of Mission at the Diocese, came to talk about Fresh Expressions and mission in the church.

Rosemary North

NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter continues to act as a source of local information, forthcoming events and outreach for St Mary's. Don't forget that local charitable events will be advertised for free. Let the Editor know what is going on by the 15th of the month before you want it to appear, and she will put it in the Newsletter.

The Newsletter continues to support itself by raising a substantial part of its costs through revenue from advertising. It is good to know that local businesses find it a good place in which to advertise.

The distribution of the Newsletter is possibly the largest enterprise associated with St Mary's. 'Bundlers' convert the contents of boxes into labelled heaps, which are collected from church by 'deliverers' who post Newsletters through letterboxes. 'Couriers' pick up multiple bundles to take to others who will make the individual deliveries. Over 70 people are involved, many of them are people not otherwise associated with the church, but who like to do something useful in the community. Any queries about distribution should be addressed to Valerie Clark. All contact details are on the back page of the Newsletter.

Jill Hipson

ANNUAL FÊTE

At our annual church summer fêete we reach out to the community at large, well beyond the borders of our parish. This event is only made possible by the tireless and dedicated work and team spirit of a large number of volunteers and we would like to extend a big thank you to all of you, whether you helped with the organisation, the setting up of the stalls, clearing up after the fete, manned stalls, donated items, baked cakes, raised plants, put puzzles together, or simply came and enjoyed yourself, you all contributed to the success of the fete.

This year the fêete was opened by pupils from St. Mary's School performing a Maypole dance. There was a host of activities for children in the Rectory garden, including face painting, a craft tent, pet's corner, a toy tombola, a bouncy castle and ice creams. Apart from all the popular games for children we had a 'Tug o' War' for the first time on the school field. Several teams, including one made up of PCC members, pitted their strength against each other.

On the playground stalls included "Nearly New Items", books, cakes, the ever-popular bottles, plants, gifts and toiletries; the Brownies had a Grab-a-Bag stall and there was also a tombola, raffle and plant raffle. We were delighted to have local artists Mary Casserley, Steph Lunn and Viki Ahearn with us, as well as the Way Inn Book Store and several charities. The BBQ, beer and drinks were extremely popular and teas, coffees and a tasty selection of cakes were served in the Parish Room.

In the church we hosted our second very successful "Puzzlefest", a vast and amazing display of puzzles which were ready to buy. Many visitors came to browse and buy whilst listening to organ recitals and beautiful songs sung by Madalena Tudorian accompanied on the piano by Roger Bowley.

The Hemel Brass Band entertained visitors with popular tunes and during the break "Shrimpy" from EastEnders and his band put on a performance.

Despite the sweltering weather a big crowd of visitors enjoyed a great day out for the whole family and supported our church as well as local and international charities. With your help we raised a record amount of £ 4,287.30 (after deduction of all expenses), a third of which went each to St. Mary's Church Roof Fund and Phakamisa with the remaining third split between Northchurch United Charities and The Swan Youth Project

Following our church's tradition, the date for this year's fêete has already been set for Saturday 6th of July 2019. Please put the date in your diaries and if you feel you could help with the organisation or running a stall, please come and speak to Linda, Rachel, Evelyn or me.

Margit Pendl-Dobbie

RAISE THE ROOF CAMPAIGN

When we started fundraising in October 2015 we never imagined that three years later we would have achieved so much. We would like to thank everyone involved for their generous gifts of time and money that made it possible that we could start with the work on our roof at the beginning of this year.

During 2018 contributions to the roof fund were made through the Bike 'n' Hike sponsored rides and a third of the funds raised at the summer fete went towards the roof fund. Various social events including a Call My Quaff evening, the Christmas Bazaar and Scottish Dancing were very much enjoyed by the church community and raised additional funds.

Andrew still plans to furnish the interior of the model church to encourage continued donations for the roof and the organ. From April 2018 to February 2019 a further £8,500 was raised by the model. A kind sponsor paid for the printing of 1000 Christmas cards picturing the model of the church the sale of which raised a further £500, and half of them are left over to sell this Christmas.

In total during the year nearly £13,000 was raised which will help to pay for our new roof, which – if everything goes to plan - we will be able to enjoy by the time you are reading this report.

However, fundraising will have to continue for the foreseeable future to cover the balance of the cost for the roof and also to pay for the urgently needed repairs to the organ, which can be started as soon as the roof has been completed.

*Margit Pendl-Dobbie
On behalf of the fundraising committee*

THE ALMSHOUSES

The Almshouses have had another busy year and our new resident, Frank Boase, has settled in well. Some of our residents now have carers visiting them twice/three times a day and all seems to be going well. The gardens continue to be nicely maintained by one of our residents, Nick Johnson.

The working party is busy with the Quinquennial Inspection and will give a detailed report once the work has been completed. This includes fitting new up-to-date fire safety doors in the building. Our accounts have been audited again by Steve Mitchell and will be agreed at our AGM. Thanks to Steve for all his work on this.

Kathy Ridges (on behalf of the Trustees)

FLOWER GUILD

The Flower Guild has organised floral and candle decorations this year for the major festivals - Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

Flower arrangements for weddings have also been organised where requested and posies for Mothering Sunday were provided, with extra numbers this year as the choir from Bridgewater School attended the service. "Flower mugs" were made and sold on our stall at the Summer Fête. Once again, these proved popular and "takings" increased on the previous year. We also ensured the flowers in church that weekend was a little more special than usual both for the fête and the Confirmation Service on the Sunday.

We participated in the Gordon Beningfield flower festival at Great Gaddesden in the summer, decorating a large window space with greenery, flowers and old farm implements to celebrate the style of the artist.

Donations from parishioners are much appreciated as are contributions of greenery for our decorations for the major festivals through the year.

Whilst the Flower Guild has a rota to organise flowers throughout the year, there are others who help with the major festivals to ensure the church looks beautiful and this is much appreciated. In particular, thanks go to Fred Turner, who over the years and without fail has been supplying and serving refreshments for everybody involved in the decorating of the church on those occasions. He is taking a well-deserved "retirement" now and we are very grateful to him.

Denise Rouse

BELLRINGERS

St Mary's is blessed with a fine sounding peal of eight bells – and an amiable band of bellringers. We are committed to ringing the bells for Sunday services and on other special occasions such as weddings. Only rarely will you hear fewer than six bells and we may even have 10 ringers who have to take turns on Sundays.

Our average age would be lower if our youngest ringer were not at University, but climbing the stairs to the ringing room helps to keep us all fit! Some of us are more expert than others, but we combine to make a good team – and we are all still learning to develop our skills. Two of our number have gained accreditation from the Association of Ringing Teachers.

At the time of writing, a Northchurch learner is being taught by a ringer from another tower so that he can gain his teaching qualification. This kind of mutual support is characteristic of bellringing. We welcome ringers from other towers to our practice nights on a Monday, and several of us attend practices at other towers during the week. We gain when our visitors are experienced – and we happily share our expertise with more novice ringers.

Revd Jonathan encourages our hospitality by generously permitting other bands of ringers to use 'his' bells. Members of the 'local bell club' attempt quarter peals every second Monday and regular friends from Hatfield and St Albans also treat the community to some quality ringing. A highlight of the year was hosting ringers from across the County at their Annual General Meeting when the guest was one of the County Association's patrons. The Very Revd the Dean of St Albans, Jeffrey John, gave the address and led the intercessions in our service of Evening Prayer, stayed for tea and opened the formal business meeting. Once a year, the local bell club association holds its monthly meeting at St Mary's when thirty or more ringers take turns on the bells.

It is true that bellringers are heard rather than seen, but half of St Mary's band do attend church and 5 of them deliver newsletters. All of them give service to the church and the community. I thank them for their continuing support and friendliness; and my thanks are also extended to members of the congregation who count the bells each Sunday, or tell me they open their windows the better to hear the bells!

Valerie Clark, Tower Captain

ST MARY'S PLAYGROUP

The team that ran St Mary's Playgroup chose to close in July 2017. Heidi Baker & Sarah Hubbard (both childminders) took on the Playgroup in Sept 2017 and it became part of the church, no longer an independent group. As childminders, we are both independently DBS checked & both hold a 12hr Paediatric First Aid Certificate. Children are not left at the playgroup, they will always attend with a parent or guardian, but we are insured and have up to date risk assessments in place. Certificates are on display inside our cupboard space in the main hall.

The playgroup meets on a Tuesday morning 09.30 - 11.30 term time only in the Parish Rooms and it is open to all. We offer tea, coffee and biscuits for a small fee per family, along with a craft each week and toys a-plenty! We often use the school holidays to meet and clean our resources, recycling where we can and ensuring all are safe.

The Playgroup is run as a non-profit making group, where we invest the monies taken back into the weekly craft and refreshments for those attending. We keep a record of our accounts, income & expenditure each week, but do not have a bank account, as we just deal in cash.

We like to mark the end of each school term with a special activity. We have had a soft play visit us; we have enjoyed the Summer in the rectory garden with sand and water play and also had a Christmas party including full lunch and presents. We supported the Church Summer Fair with having the sand and water out, with no charge and plan to do the same again this year.

We have now joined resources with the Berkhamsted Under-5s Group and share as much as we can, in a bid to save space. Each group now has access to the toy cupboards in both the main room and those stored in the Lockhart Room. It is working really well and resources are being updated all the time for the small people in our community. The resources can be

made available for anybody who would like to use them; though we are unable to leave the cupboards unlocked, as we could not risk children accessing the toys themselves, as the cupboards are full and are a potential health and safety risk that we could not cover by insurance without adult supervision.

We could not run it on our own and many people help and support us each week, with Barbara Gilkes coming in to do the coffee every Tuesday morning & Jonathan always coming to say hello to the children and often joining them in their craft too.

The group has grown and we have lots of regular visitors and some that come occasionally, which is lovely. It is an inclusive group; please share this with anybody you think may wish to come along.

Heidi Baker

KNEELER PROJECT

There really is not much to report this year, but this does not mean we are in total decline! Three kneelers are in the process of being stitched.

I must say a very big thank you to Margaret Davies for finishing kneelers that other stitchers have been unable to complete. For a variety of reasons, the spirit has been willing but the fingers have not been up to the task.

Another thank-you to all who helped to move the kneelers from the body of the church to unoccupied pews at the beginning of the Christmas season (and to return them afterwards). Services where members of the congregation each carry a candle are very atmospheric. But the kneelers need to be protected from candle wax which would otherwise seal itself around the wool and ruin the design and all the hard work. The choir in particular is to be thanked for leaping in to help.

There is space for more kneelers. If anyone wishes to start stitching, there is plenty of wool in store and I can help with the design.

Marilyn Pryor

2ND NORTHCHURCH BROWNIES

It has been a fun-filled year for us. We welcomed Becky to join us in our leadership team. The Brownies had a few suggestions on what her Owl name should be. When Becky was deciding what name, she would like to be called, I did say it had to be a name one didn't mind being shouted out in Berkhamsted High Street!! Out of all the ideas, Becky liked the name Midnight Owl the best.

We have done various badges last year including Stargazing, Agility and Culture. The Culture badge was good as we had a gentleman come to demonstrate how to make pressed apple juice. We all had a go at peeling, chopping, and pressing/juicing the apples. At the end of the demonstration we got to try the juice we had made. The Stargazing badge was interesting and included learning about the different phases of the moon. Looking at the

stars however proved a bit tricky as on most Thursday evenings it was so cloudy we couldn't see any.

In September 2018 Girlguiding released its new programme for all the sections. This meant new activities and new interest badges. We started the new programme in January. After a chat about the different themes and what we thought they meant, we voted to do the Express Myself theme. This means that the girls will be able to develop their creativity in all sorts of ways. They will be making up stories and creating inventions to solve problems and to start thinking laterally. I would like to thank County Councillor Terry Douris for providing a grant from his community budget to pay for this.

In December we went on our annual trip to Aylesbury Theatre, and saw Peter Pan. (Oh yes, we did!) We all had a great time, and are looking forward to going back later this year. On a personal note ... back in 2018 I was presented with my 20-year service bar by our Division Commissioner. We had a small party to celebrate. I can't believe I have been a leader for that long. Being involved in Scouting and Guiding has been in my family for a great number of years. I think my parents and my aunt would be so proud that I have carried on the tradition. My great-niece, meanwhile, has joined Rainbows, and I hope she will be the one to carry on the tradition.

Brown Owl (Susan Anderson) and all at 2nd Northhchurch Brownies

MONDAY CLUB

After more than twenty very interesting and happy years we decided to end our running of the Monday Club at the end of 2018.

Planning programmes, making any necessary contacts as well as general organizing on the day of a meeting, whether an outing or in the Parish Room, had involved an ever-increasing amount of time. Hence the decision to finish which we felt, though a sad one, was realistic. We finished in style in December when we enjoyed a wonderful Christmas lunch catered for us at the Social Centre. We will still see many of the club's members when out and about and keep in touch as news is passed around.

Over the last twenty plus years we have been so fortunate in having the help and support of Joan Cox and Jennie Budd in the kitchen and Tony Lockhart in providing lifts for members when needed. Last, but not least, our thanks go to the ladies who run the Monday morning children's group who, whenever asked, lifted and put in place the big tables when we required them, making our task in preparing for the meeting so much easier.

Joan Downhill and Barbara Lloyd

OPEN CHURCH on WEDNESDAY

During 2018 we decided that we would keep the Church open and accessible to all. It has evolved into a time of fellowship, usually over a jigsaw, with a cup of tea and home-made cake. Peggy puts some light music on the CD system and it has become an oasis during each week. We have welcomed visitors to look around our beautiful church, the grass cutting

team and those working in the churchyard have a welcome break too. Mums with children have popped their heads in to see what is going on!

We have taken a winter break, but will resume as soon as the better weather comes around Easter.

This group will hopefully evolve to include more people, especially those who may be new to the area or live alone. We have been asked to include board games etc. Why not bring along your knitting, sketch book or paints? Find a quiet corner to read a book. This is a group for everyone to be included and to contribute ideas to, so why not come along this year to a friendly welcome, chatter and laughter, a hot drink and cake?

Evelyn Hodgson, Peggy Sear, Jill Bugg and Charlotte Pritchard.

CHRISTIAN AID

For Christian Aid Week 2018, 17 roads were collected from by the St Mary's team, with 3 new (or returning) team members. This resulted in an increase in monies collected; we achieved a total of £1,755.74, including the money raised at the soup lunch.

Inevitably not everyone can be available every year, so I would love to see new members to the team! If you feel you'd like to help somehow, maybe your road isn't currently being 'worked', perhaps you could job share with a neighbour.

Hopefully, we can run a soup lunch again, so look out for information on this. It is a great responsibility but a greater joy to be able to contribute into the lives of people in desperate need.

Thank you to all those that joined me on the streets of Northchurch and those that made donations. The money we raise is so vital and I ask you to continue the St Mary's tradition of supporting Christian Aid, this year.

If you think that you could join the team for Christian Aid Week 2019, 12th to 18th May, please contact Nick Laing on 01442 873 629 or email me on alslaing@aol.com

Nick Laing

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

The annual box count takes place over December and usually into January too! This year we have paid in the grand total of £839.19, which is a tremendous result from mostly loose change.

We have lost a few box holders this year, for various reasons, but four more volunteers have been registered, so we are nearly back up to 40 boxes again. Every little bit helps to safeguard children at risk within the UK. Victims who have witnessed domestic violence, have been affected by divorce or abuse, children leaving the care system or runaways are all helped and supported by trained case workers, youth centres, playgroups and safe spaces.

You may have read about the “county lines” crisis where these youngsters are targeted as drug mules, so the work is even more essential and has had to change to meet this growing threat to the health and well-being of the most vulnerable children in our society.

If you have a few pennies to spare then I can find you a box. Online donations are easily made through the Children’s Society website. Thank you all so much.

Charlotte & Gareth Pritchard

FAIRTRADE CHURCH

We are a FairTrade Church, which means we should be using fairly traded teas, coffees and any other produce, as far as is possible and at any event we hold.

If you need any information or supplies for your events, or for work places or organisations, then please don’t hesitate to contact Nick & Alison Laing on 01442 873 629 or email on alslaing@aol.com.

Nick Laing

BEDS & HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST - SPONSORED BIKE ‘N HIKE

The bike and hike took place, as always, on the second Saturday of September, which, last year turned out to be Saturday 8th.

The day began for Brian and I at Northchurch St Mary’s, nice and early, to put up the posters and meet Jennie Budd and Elizabeth Lachenal as they set up the refreshments for all our hungry and thirsty visitors. There was a total of 36 people who came to St Mary’s and I thank our cheerful team of welcomers who helped to make the day so special.

We had about nine people who went out to explore the surrounding area and churches on bicycle or foot to raise much needed funding for the historic churches trust. If you have never taken part, I would urge you to try it out this year. It will be on Saturday 14th September and there is no need to carry food or water for lunch as several churches on the way provide lunch, afternoon tea and toilet facilities, plus, if you look old enough, you will inevitably pass several public houses too where lunch can be purchased (or in our case, not go past but call in).

We set off round the nine Berkhamsted churches, leaving Berkhamsted to reach Wigginton Baptist church at 10:32, just in time for a group photograph for their calendar for 2019. From there we visited our sister church of St Bartholomew, which is the highest church in the diocese, so a superb ride down the hill to Tring. I made a hilarious video of us going down the hill very slowly and carefully because of the adverse camber on the road, being overtaken by a group of young cyclists racing each other down the hill.

On to Tring and a hug with Chris Hoare at St Peter and St Paul, then round the various churches until we made it to New Mill Baptist Church for a delicious lunch of sandwiches

and cake. On, then to Drayton Beauchamp (a really pretty little church which is off the beaten track), Puttenham, (for wonderful cakes) Long Marston, Marsworth, Ivinghoe, Little Gaddesden, Nettleden, Potten End, Sunnyside and Bourne End to finish off our ride at the Three Horseshoes for a well-earned pint of ale and a short rest before riding home, happy, well exercised and very tired.

In total we covered 45.7 miles, five pubs, 30 churches and raised £354 from our generous sponsors. The total raised by St Mary's volunteers this year came to £1, 472.50 of which £578 has come to our church for building repairs.

Thank you very much to everyone who took part, who manned the church and to our wonderful sponsors who make the whole effort so worthwhile.

Evelyn Hodgson

NORTHCHURCH UNITED CHARITIES

The Trustees are comprised of representatives from Berkhamsted Town Council, Northchurch Parish Council, Sunnyside church and St Mary's Church, all of which organisations contribute to the funds dispersed, the remainder of the funds coming from income on the original investments. These organisations all contribute funds to the NUC. As no funds were received from St Mary's church last year, it is hoped that funds will be received from the proceeds of the church fête in 2019. Rev Jonathan Gordon was elected as Chair again this year. The Trustees met in November to make their annual distribution of funds to individuals and clubs, including the Happy Wanderers Club, the Berkhamsted and Tring Stroke Support Club and the Berkhamsted Under-5s Group, helping the elderly and young children requiring extra support, in Berkhamsted and Northchurch.

Rosemary North

THE CHARITY OF DR SMOULT

The title may sound old-fashioned, but this Charity is right up-to-date. 300 years ago, it gave grants towards apprentices; nowadays both boys and girls may receive financial help towards a wide range of educational activities. Way back, only residents of the Parish of Northchurch could benefit; today the Charity's area of operation covers the United Benefice and the Chiltern Park Estate. Young people active in either St Mary's or in St Bartholomew's may apply even if they live outside the specified area.

Dr Smoult's fund has been carefully husbanded over the years and its capital is spread over a range of investments. Every year, the Trustees receive independent advice on their investments, and monies may be moved in order to increase the Charity's income with acceptable risk. It is the income, not the capital, from which the Trustees make grants for educational purposes. During 2018, the Trustees distributed grants totalling £27,100 to individuals, schools and youth groups

Anyone interested in more information, or who knows of someone under 25 who might qualify, should contact the Rector, Revd Jonathan Gordon.

Valerie Clark

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

The past year at St. Mary's has continued to flourish with a record number of 150 families choosing to send their children to school here.

We were delighted that 87% of children leaving the Reception class achieved a good level of development. The national rate was 72%. The Year 1 children again undertook the statutory phonics screening check in June. This assesses the children's ability to decode words using only their phonic knowledge and this year 93% of the children achieved the qualifying mark. The national rate was 83%. We are also pleased with our continuing high attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2). The children achieved 77% in Reading and 82% in both Writing and Maths. This compares favourably with the national rates of 75%, 69% and 76% respectively.

2018 saw our third Year 6 cohort. This time 26 children sat the end of Key Stage 2 tests. Our overall combined reading, writing and mathematics result of 81% was significantly higher than the national figure of 64%. We are extremely proud of the results and the tremendously hard work of staff and children.

This year's School Development Plan (SDP) incorporates the Ofsted next steps for the school to enable us to achieve our School Aims and Vision. It sets objectives for improving teaching and learning, and considering standards of achievement and pupil well-being. The Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team are regularly reporting progress of the plan at Committee and full Governors' meetings.

The agreed school priorities set are:

1. (Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment). For all teaching to be at least 'Good' with an increase in 'Outstanding' teaching throughout the year.
2. (Outcomes for pupils at the school). To raise the proportion of children meeting and exceeding age related expectations in writing across the school through continuing to develop the role of middle leaders in raising whole school standards.
3. (Quality of Leadership and Management). To enable children to feel safe to take risks and challenge themselves in order to reach their true potential.
4. (Quality of Leadership and Management) To develop the school's distinctive Christian vision so that it can be established and promoted by leadership at all levels to enable pupils and adults to flourish.

Our Christian values underpin our school culture and every half term we still focus on a different value. For the children this is mainly explored through Collective Worship, RE lessons and as part of the SEAL curriculum (Social and emotional aspects of learning). We inform the parents in the newsletter, encouraging the whole school community to focus on the value together. The staff think about how they can embody the value, when they discuss it at a staff meeting.

St. Mary's, along with all schools in Hertfordshire, have a new Herts Agreed Syllabus for the teaching of RE based on eight areas of learning: Beliefs and practices, Sources of wisdom, Symbols and actions, Prayer, worship and reflection, Identity and belonging, Ultimate

questions, Human responsibility and values, Justice and fairness. St. Mary's teachers have received training and implemented Religious Education material to assist with the teaching of Christianity called 'Understanding Christianity' and we have used this to enrich the RE curriculum that covers each of the eight areas of learning, alongside the other five main world faiths: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

Throughout its operation, the school promotes the fundamental British values including mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. To enrich the curriculum, Miss Groves organises many exciting trips and activities for the children. This year the children have enjoyed numerous trips and visits to enrich their understanding of Christianity and other world religions, in addition to the regular church services and acts of Collective Worship run by Jonathan Gordon and David Russell from Northchurch Baptist Church.

St Mary's School continues to have one of the highest proportions of children who walk to school in the area.

The Smoult Trust has been most supportive to the school during the past year and has kindly provided funding to enable two children go on residential visits with their classes. We are very proud of what the children have achieved in sport and PE at St. Mary's and this will continue to be an area of focus and development for us.

Some of the many activities that have run this year have included (*free of charge);

- Sports – Running Club*, Netball Club, Boogaloo Boogie, Cheerleading, Tennis Club, Cricket Club, Speed-stacking*
- Other – Homework Club*, Maths Club*, Forest School*, Green Team, * Gardening Club*, Collective Worship*,
- Violin, Piano, Guitar, Recorder* and Ukulele* tuition and Choir*, Football Club, Netball Club, Girls' Football Club, Mini-Olympics, Rock Steady Music, Games Club* and Growth Mindset*, Yoga*

As ever, the School Association has worked very hard, raising money throughout the past year. Successful events included a Christmas Fair, Gatsby Evening and Auction, Parents' Quiz, Discos, Film Clubs, Easter Egg Competition, Photos by Carrie, Charity Match and Christmas Trees for Schools Scheme. They are funding Mother's Day flowers for every child, a contribution towards school trips for every class and have raised money to help the governors with a building project to upgrade the toilets in the top end of the school and also paid for the refurbishment of the infant toilets, electric gates at the front of the school and a new footpath.

We encourage the whole school community to support local and national charities and this year we have raised money for Children in Need, Sport Relief, The Bishop of St Albans Harvest Appeal, Homestart Dacorum, Hospice of St. Francis, Macmillan Cancer, Race for Life, Royal British Legion poppy appeal and Brain Tumour Research.

The wraparound child care continues to be very popular with our parents. This means that children can be looked after at Breakfast Club from 7.45 a.m. and remain in school at the

after-school club until collection at 6.00 p.m. Children who are not in full-time education are able to join our lunch club and then take part in Pre-School, before joining the older children after school for the club.

The annual music concerts in July were once again a highlight of the year. Children learning music within and outside school were given the chance to perform in two concerts, organised by Mrs Christie, with the kind help of Mr. and Mrs. Horton and Mrs. Osmond. In July, the KS2 production, "Dragon Days" was another highlight and included singing and acting of an exceptionally high standard.

We see music as an area to continue to develop at St Mary's. We have renegotiated our contract with the Herts Music Service, to include providing training for our teachers, to develop the quality of music provision in the classroom. We continue to offer peripatetic music lessons in violin, guitar and piano. The music service also runs a school choir (free of charge to parents), where the children are prepared for events during the year. They proudly performed in front of their families at the O2 Arena on the 31st January this year. St Mary's is a voluntary-aided (VA) maintained school. Maintained schools receive their running costs from central government via the local authority. In contrast to other types of maintained schools, only 90% of the capital costs of a VA school are met by the state. The foundation (in our case, the Governing Body), has to contribute the remaining 10% of the capital costs. Parents are encouraged to pay a voluntary contribution towards the school's maintenance funds in VA schools.

As we are a Church school the majority of the Governors are appointed by the PCC and the Diocese.

Our Chair since September 2018 is Alan Kemp and Owen Lewis is Vice Chair. The Governing Body has worked extremely hard throughout the past year, providing support and challenge, for which the school is extremely grateful.

Vanessa Hunt, Head Teacher