



**MARCH 1, 2022**  
**ST MARY'S LUTON ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021**

## INTRODUCTION

By Mike Jones

2021 was the second year that St Mary's was impacted by COVID-19. We are all aware of what that has meant for ourselves. Home, school, work, social life, community life and spiritual life all changed. This affected us as individuals, as a church gathered in worship, a church in community and in mission.

I would like to thank everyone for your hard work, positive approach, devotion to the Lord, continued giving and creativity. Everyone is important to the Lord and together we make the church. I am proud of what we the people of St Mary's have achieved this year and the creativity, kindness and competence that we have shown.



Above: the new part of the parish

As a church on the ground, 2021 was notable because at the APCM in 2021 we completed the absorption of St Matthew's parish into the parish of Luton.

- The first map shows High Town Parish.
- The second map shows it as an addition to the current parish. In both maps, [1] is St Mary's.

This meant that we have more of the parish above the railway line and High Town Road has become part of the parish. You can see the parishes by searching on <https://www.achurchnearyou.com>



Above: the original parish with the new High Town addition (smaller scale)

### The buildings

As a church we continued to run the St Matthew's building. We employed Ian Rowlands to do this through the year, funded by rentals. This was to help the Diocese with the transition to leasing the building to the Romanian Orthodox Church. This agreement will come to an end in February 2022.

Hirings have begun to return to the St Mary's building. As a PCC we had recognized that we want to increase the use of the main church building so we started a project to replace the chairs in the church. This included congregational chair testing to find chairs which are comfortable, stackable, movable, not too heavy and appropriate for the building.

As a church in worship, we began the year worshipping online and brought the 9am service back first. We brought the 10:30am service back once we were happy that we could deliver youth and children's ministry. Thank you to the worship team, now led by Richard Cowling, who have been flexible with all the changes.

Josh Hodson did amazing work on the worship computer system which we completely redesigned. We had to create a system at the back of church so that we could deliver services online and in-church through the same equipment (that is far more difficult to do than it sounds). While everything was online we used software to help us stream to both Facebook and YouTube.

Once we returned to church we spent a lot of time creating a system that volunteers could use. This

was important because Josh and Hermione moved to Sweden this year. We designed a system where we streamed the 9am service using a phone and we recorded the 10:30am for people to access on YouTube. We launched the volunteer team SAS: Screens-Audio-Streaming and we are gradually gaining the skills we need to use the system.

As we came back we created a simpler shape for the 10:30am service to enable the children's ministry to be half an hour long, then we gradually lengthened the service.

Many of us maybe do not realize how difficult a task this has been and the competence and creativity that has been poured into these ministries week by week. I am humbled by what we have achieved and grateful to have spent this year at St Mary's. Thank you to Josh, the SAS and the worship team; Adam, Ulrike & the youth team; Dawn, Ruth, Eleanor and the young church team for all the hard work.

### **Hospitality and Mission.**

Welcome Wednesday has been a great success. This is where we open up the building to the public on Wednesday mornings with an 11am devotional.

Open Church gives the opportunity for people to share the love of God in word and listening to people. For many of us our greatest joy is our relationship with the risen Lord Jesus and our prayer is for others to know the joy of fellowship with him. Memorable was one lady who walked in and said "I've been reading the Bible and praying and I want to become a Christian."

**As a church in mission. Mission for us is holistic.** We see it expressed in word, deed and symbolism.

The focus of the Peace Centre continued to be engaging with the issues that threaten peaceful relationships in Luton, and contributing to the building of a strong and resilient community. We continue to work closely with partners around the town and beyond: Luton Council of Faiths, the two councils of Mosques, Bedfordshire Police, Luton Borough Council. Peter has had some discussion with the police and violence reduction unit around developing work to address the issues of knife crime in the town. Israeli Palestinian relations again proved to be a major issue in the town and Peter was central in organising community mediators for a potentially troublesome protest. The Centre was able to contribute to a significant community mediation response during COP26, the two-week climate conference in Glasgow in November.

Over the past few years "mission as symbol" has been growing in importance. We continued using the Tree of Hope through the year. Next year we plan to relaunch Alpha.

**As a church in community,** we continued to connect with people through physical and online means, small groups, phone calls and cards and letters and visits and gifts and practical help. Thank you to Sue, Ulrike and the pastoral team & front office who have worked so hard. We recognised that we needed to think about how people journey into church and to welcome people in a way that reflects our multicultural nature so we started a new project to explore that which hopefully will bear fruit in 2022-23.

### **Our church as a locally financed fellowship.**

As a church we are a locally financed community. God provides, mostly through the generosity of his people. St Mary's belongs to you if you have worshipped with us for six months or more; and, if you have worshipped with us for six months, we would ask you to ask the Lord how you can support St Mary's financially so that the remarkable worship and ministry can continue. We are not subsidised from outside so everything we do is financed from ourselves. Please pray for God to "give us our daily bread" and pray for entrepreneurs to emerge from our community so that we can bring social renewal to our town over the next years.

I feel a deep gratitude and joy for who you have been and what you have done in 2021. This has been a year where we have needed to keep running the race set before us. I have been grateful for the energy and initiative in colleagues - paid and non-paid. My life has been enriched by walking with all of you this year and I am confident in our future because I walk with you, and together we walk with the Lord

## **LOOKING ACROSS CHURCH**

### **YOUNG CHURCH**

*By Dawn Mortimer*

As we entered 2021, still in lockdown, from January to March, we continued recording children's material and holding zooms monthly. Because of children's screen fatigue and adults' time constraints we used previously recorded material when needed.

When church opened for the 9 o'clock services, we made activity bags for children available, these are still available at the back of the church.

During April - June we provided colouring and activity sheets for any children who wished to access them. We continued with both Zoom and online recordings using both new and previously recorded sessions which were streamed after the 10.30am online main church services.

The yearly transition session where year 6 children move to Youth was held via Zoom and the children split into breakout rooms to be with their respective groups.

For Easter week, we set up an Easter trail in the church garden using free published material. This could be accessed by the public in addition to church members. Over the year, in the 0-18's Ministry, we have trialled successfully some 5th Sunday joint sessions with the Youth.

On June 27th we held our first session back in person in the secure back church garden. This went well. Because we are a small volunteer team, we put all the children, age range 3-11 years old, together in one group

During July and August, Young Church were outdoors as much as possible. Numbers increased to 15-18 children each week. We encouraged parents to help us during summer sessions.

During the Autumn term we focused on character studies: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Joshua, Gideon, Mary and Joseph. With weather permitting, the main teaching and stories were held indoors and games outdoors. We also began to explore using Energize, a children and youth biblical session with supporting materials published by Urban Saints.

Attendance has been difficult for families due to COVID and isolations. Usually, numbers remained lower at 10-14. The Autumn term was particularly challenging due to a temporary loss of a team member for family reasons, and managing the large age range was difficult as we had insufficient helper support. There have been a couple of sessions where we were unable to run due to low team numbers. Overall, the year went well, and we believe the children benefited from being back in church and meeting their friends again. It has also overall been helpful for the children in bringing back a sense of stability again.

As we look forwards to 2022 we are hoping to return as soon as possible to two groups, but this will be dependent on having a larger team of volunteers. Each session we need two adults to lead and two to help. The use of Energize will continue for the foreseeable future and as soon as possible we will use the outdoors space for various aspects of the sessions.

God has been so good and we have felt his guiding hand on us throughout.

## YOUTH

*by Adam Whiting*

2021 was yet another test on the resilience of the young people here at St Mary's. It began in lockdown

3.0 where after multiple times returning to face to face youth work, we were back online for all of our sessions again. This involved, Tuesday catch-up, Impact Online and Sunday youth. St Mary's was still a leader in the digital youth work field and Adam was delivering talks for training organisations and podcasts as well as for other youth workers in the diocese.

In February we started a fourth group the young people could attend called 'CBS for Youth'. This is led by the amazing Ulrike Hunt and has remained online on Sunday evenings since it began. By March 2021 we were back to delivering a hybrid youth ministry with Tuesday catch up and CBS for youth remaining online and Impact and Sunday morning youth being delivered in person.

As the pandemic began to quieten down, we wanted to attend a summer gathering with other people as the Youth had missed this in 2020 (only attending one online). However, we felt it was wise to not do this due to the close proximity it would involve. Instead, we embarked on our first trip since 2019 in March 2021 where we headed to Clacton beach. Thankfully, we were blessed with a lovely warm day and the young people had a lovely time.

2021 was a year for growth within the youth ministry with 4 young people coming up from the Children's ministry at Easter which was shortly followed by 2 new young people joining us. In total, we had 11 young people join the ministry with only 1 young person moving on. This too can be said for the youth team. In 2021, we welcomed Manohar Reddy and Titilayo Adewale to the team. Both are valuable members of the team with Manohar helping primarily on Sunday mornings and Titilayo helping with Impact. We also saw the grand return of Jean Godden to the youth ministry which has been a real blessing to the young people.

A long standing, key partner of St Mary's Youth is 'The Feast'. In November we decided to make this relationship stronger by merging our 'Impact' youth group with The Feast. This meant that we were very blessed to be joined by Kristina Druce who works part time for The Feast as their Luton youth worker. Kristina is a real asset to have on the team and is helping to take the group forward in relationships with one another and with other young people of different cultures and religions.

December was a bittersweet month for the ministry. While the Ministry has been flourishing and relationships stronger than ever, Adam and Bethany announced that they would be leaving St Mary's in 2022. While this news was sad, thankfully we had the Christmas special just around the corner and what a special it was! The young people had a formal dinner party during Impact where they were

encouraged to dress up, and were served a Christmas dinner and pudding, cooked by a chef. The young people were waited on hand and foot by the youth team. Following this was the return of the historic, silly secret Santa except this time, the gifts were not so silly. With a grant from the diocese, we were able to up the ante with the gifts and make the game even more enjoyable than usual.

As I always add at the end of my reports, it truly is a blessing to work with each of the young people here at St Mary's. They really are like no other! As youth pastor, I want to thank each of them so much for creating such a welcoming and safe environment for new young people to join (and more and more have joined heading into 2022!). I am very proud of each, and every young person and it is with a very heavy heart that I am leaving. I'm certain that the resilience of this group will hold this group together until a new youth worker arrives. I want to also take this opportunity, to thank the wider church family, for investing in this ministry. Your investment, either through money or time, truly is shaping the young people of today, not tomorrow, to be amazing Christians within our communities. But it doesn't stop there, as ever, with the ministry growing as fast as it is, we need more help so please consider whether you can give an hour or two, a week or even a month, it all helps! 2022 is looking to be a very joyful and fulfilling year for the youth ministry!

## PASTORAL CARE

*by Sue Carter (Pastoral Care Pastor)*

With the Pandemic continuing during the past year, the Pastoral Care Team has continued to meet every 3-4 weeks using Zoom. The Team consists of Mike Jones, Vicar, Ulrike Hunt, Anne Adams, Cathy Nobles, Chris Adams & Sue Carter. We discuss any church member who may have a particular need that we are aware of and try to offer practical help or support where we can. We pray for those church members.

The Prayer Net has continued to provide prayer support for any who request prayer. The prayer request is shared with nearly 30 members who have committed themselves to pray when a request is shared. The Pastoral Phone continues to be available to anyone who wants to make a prayer request between 8am-8pm. (Tel: 07483 898276)

At Christmas we were able to distribute gifts to 12 of our older members of the congregation, which were appreciated, including a jar of marmalade to each made by Angela Symonds! They were accompanied by a Christmas Card signed by our vicar, Mike Jones.

We note with sadness that one of our older members, Doris Weir died in December 2021.

Three newsletters were written during the year. In these was included news of the missionaries we support. These were available as hard copies and posted out to the older members who were not able to get to church, as well as by email. The St Mary's Luton: Community Facebook Closed Group continues to be a good way to communicate with the congregation with news, prayer requests and information. There are nearly 150 members of this group. The weekly newsletter is emailed out to anyone in the congregation who would like to receive it. (If you don't receive it, please contact Ulrike Hunt, Church Administrator)

Welcome was part of the remit of the Pastoral Care Team but we realised that we needed to split the meetings to focus either on Pastoral or on Welcome, so a Welcome group has emerged this year. This will continue to develop in the year ahead. Rev Dr Andy Pike joined our team as curate and he is beginning to help us to understand how we can best use ChurchSuite to communicate with the church. We recognise that God is sending along people of many different nations and we want to welcome them in to be part of the Church Family.

## SMALL GROUPS

*By Cathy Nobles*

Throughout the pandemic, Small Groups have played a part in building our church community. Besides the groups that are listed below, there are many other informal groups that meet. The Men's Group has met from time to time for a movie together or gathered for a bike ride together.

Here are the groups that have formally been running. Through this year, the groups have met through zoom and where possible in person.

1. Monday Eat and Greet meets fortnightly on various days
2. Seekers Group meets monthly at 12:30 on various days
3. Book Club meets Monday evening at 7:30
4. Ladies Bible Study meets on Tuesday evening at 7:30
5. Community Bible Study meets on Wednesday at 7:30
6. Sunday Get Together Home Group meets on Thursday at 4:00
7. Walkers meets fortnightly on Thursday at 10:00
8. Rare Christians in the Workplace met in various pubs for 8 weeks while we talked about the book RARE Leadership together.

9. Calm Zone met on Wednesday nights for the term and worked through Mike and Ruth's Calm Course.

## LOOKING OUTWARD

### SCREENS-AUDIO-STREAMING

*by Jason Hunt*

This year has been a time of transition for the people working at the sound and screen desks in St Mary's. Josh Hudson led the technical side of our services during the time of lockdowns and online services, and handed over the system to a new team of volunteers when he departed for Sweden. There are two aspects to serving on the tech desks: there is the sound desk, mixing sound from the preachers, readers and service leaders along with the singers and musicians; separately, there is the screens desk, cuing up the next reading passage, song verse or camera shot to go onto the monitors and projectors around church - and sometimes online via Facebook or YouTube. The team now comprises of experienced old hands and some keen newbies! (We are grateful to Lesley in the office who sets up all the items to go onto the screens for each service.)

Being involved in Sound & Screens can be a great way to feel part of the service and of allowing others to make the most of what is happening in church. We are hoping more of you might join us to help out in this way. If you would like to be part of the team, please see Jason Hunt - we can arrange for training or you could shadow one of our current SASers during a service to see what it is involved.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

*By Lesley Shrosbree*

We have maintained a presence on social media through use of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. During this year we have expanded our use of the St. Mary's Luton: Community group on Facebook.

We regularly stream our 9am services to Facebook and more recently direct to YouTube. We have also begun to upload our 10.30am sermons to YouTube. This replaces our audio sermons that had been available on our website. We also have a back catalogue of Soul Space videos available here.

During this year we have continued to update our website frequently and have redesigned the page navigation to make it more accessible for people who are new to the church.

We also maintain a presence on the Church of England's 'A Church Near You' webpage. A Church Near You is the Church of England's church-finder

tool. It allows people to locate their parish church, or search for particular events/services.

## OPEN CHURCH - WELCOME WEDNESDAY

*by Anne Adams*

We are so pleased that for all of 2021 (except for some weeks during the early Covid lockdown) we have been able to open the church each Wednesday morning for 3 hours. A short devotional service is held at 11 am with a regular number attending who are often joined by visitors who pop in. We have a wonderful group of volunteers with the team of St Mary's Luton Community Chaplains who enable the church to be open. We are very grateful to them all.

This team were also able to open the church for the Heritage Weekend in September and welcome a good number of visitors who joined the tours run by Peter Adams.

Every time the church doors are open people come in! Some to look at the building, some to sit in the peaceful space, some to pray and some to find a chat. Many engaging conversations have happened during the year. Many seeds are sown - do pray with us that visitors would be impacted with the love of Jesus. It has been wonderful to see a small number of those who have visited begin to attend church regularly and find a welcome in God and here with us, God's people.

## ST MARY'S CENTRE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

*by Peter Adams*

As in 2020, while the focus of our work, engaging with the issues that threaten peaceful relationships in Luton, and contributing to the building of a strong and resilient community, remained the same, the means of accomplishing it were considerably different from normal.

The positive fruit of lockdown and a change in pace of activity has been the development of our central core, a thoroughly Biblical and very practical understanding of what it means for Christians to be people of peace. The teaching series we began at the end of 2020 on Jesus, Truth and Grace, ran to 9 sessions, and explored how Jesus oriented his life and ministry around the themes, values and a lifestyle of grace and compassion, truth, justice and '*shalom*' (peace, welfare, order). We had the opportunity to present this material on the second Sunday of each month, our monthly Peace service online, and the Wednesday morning devotional. All the material is available online on the St Mary's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation YouTube

channel. In September we began a new series on 'Living as God's people in a conflicted world.' We would love to develop a regular podcast as a means of getting out the resources and stories we have, and address the many challenges in our world, but need the skills and time of others to produce and market this if it is to be worthwhile.

Cathy continues to work closely with Mike in development of materials and teaching around Joyskills and RARE leadership that aim to equip people to live positive lives despite the challenges of our society. Cathy continues to seek to write and record her many experiences on the Reconciliation Walk 25 years ago, and we hope that will be online before too long.

We continue to work closely with partners around the town and beyond: Luton Council of Faiths, the two councils of Mosques, Bedfordshire Police, Luton Borough Council. Peter has had some discussion with the police and violence reduction unit around developing work to address the issues of knife crime in the town. Our Knife Phoenix sculpture returned to Luton midway through the year from a sojourn in Bedford, and has been a stimulus to discussions with young people arrested for carrying knives. Israeli Palestinian relations again proved to be a major issue in the town and Peter was central in organising community mediators for a potentially troublesome protest.

Finally, the Centre was able to contribute to a significant community mediation response during COP26, the two-week climate conference in Glasgow in November 2021. Anticipating major protests, the Scottish government funded Mediation Scotland to place mediators on the streets to work with 10,000 police, tens of thousands of protestors and the Glasgow community. Peter was invited to co-lead the project because of his extensive experience working with the community and police during protests. A team of 50 volunteer mediators, with between 10 and 25 on duty, had an exhausting but very fruitful time. It is our hope that the lessons from this will be applied to future planning for protests, and we would hope to be involved.

You can read more here.

<http://www.stmarysforpeace.org/blog>

## MISSION

by Anne Adams

St Mary's is a church that seeks to look outwards to Luton and the world through giving, prayer, relationship, serving and sending.

Locally, we are part of Luton Deanery on both the **Chapter** and **Synod**. Also, in the town, we join with

Transforming Luton which is an association of some 40 churches that pray together monthly and co-operate in various ways; we are also members of **Churches Together In Luton**, and we are on **Luton Council of Faiths**.

As with most areas of church life, we had to continue to make adjustments to our activities during the ongoing pandemic so that our work into the town has had a different emphasis. Some of our usual activities have been on hold while other new activities have emerged.

Our outreach is holistic and we seek to serve through the various parachurch organisations in town which mostly operate within the parish.

St Mary's members are employed, volunteer, give, pray and/or sit as trustees on missions that include:

**Foodbank.** One of our members is on the board. This has been a very active year for the Foodbank and St Mary's hosted food collections during the year.

**Luton Community Chaplaincy (LCC)** was initiated by St Mary's and a number of our members are chaplains. This has chaplains in the Mall, the Town Hall and the Magistrates Court.

The St Mary's team of chaplains have been active all through the year enabling Welcome Wednesday to function, and most importantly, having many helpful conversations with visitors.

**Mission Direct** helps people to make a practical lasting difference to some of the world's most vulnerable people by going on 2-week overseas mission trips. One of our members works for Mission Direct.

**NOAH**, which shows Christian care and compassion to the homeless of Luton and is mainly located in the parish, some of our members volunteer with NOAH.

**Street Pastors** provide a caring Christian presence in the town centre every Friday and Saturday night from 10pm to 4am. Some of our members serve as Street Pastors.

**The Feast:** one of our members works for the Feast with another being part of the local steering group. The Feast brings together teenagers from different faiths and cultures to build friendships, explore faith and change lives.

**Luton & Dunstable Hospital Volunteers** - several members volunteer in the hospital

**Youthscape** is a nationwide youth charity. **Youthscape - Luton** seeks to reconnect the Christian community with young people and to make a positive difference to their lives through its work in local secondary schools with young people from

all backgrounds. Several church members work or volunteer with Youthscape - Luton.

**Prayer for Luton** - Ulrike Hunt leads and coordinates regular prayer initiatives for the churches in the town. We are all welcome to join with these opportunities.

**St Mary's gives away** 10% of undesignated church income to support mission, both within Luton and internationally. In 2021 this was reduced due to the church deficit and we gave away just over 5% of the church undesignated income. During 2020 we focussed our support on our mission partners with no gifts made to local organisations. In 2021 the mission committee recognised the challenges that organisations were experiencing in raising funds for their important work, so we reduced the amount given to mission partners and made several smaller donations mainly to local organisations. Thus in 2021 St Mary's were able to send funds to: our four mission partner couples, Tearfund, NOAH, Azalea, Youthscape, Luton Community Chaplaincy, Oasis, The Feast, Wenlock School (the Deanery School) and Domboshawa Theological College in Zimbabwe.

An appeal at the end of 2021 was made with gifts received to increase our giving to our mission partners.

Thank you to the mission committee for their work over the year and to the pastoral team who have taken up some of the work around liaising with and caring for our mission partners

## ST. MARY'S CHAPLAINCY

*By Cathy Nobles*

Luton Community Chaplaincy and St. Mary's opened a new group this year when the two groups decided they wished to have a Chaplaincy group that would serve Welcome Wednesday and other events that might be happening at St. Mary's.

The team of 4 were commissioned May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The teams started serving as we opened every Wednesday from 10:00am - 1:00pm.

The team is made up of 4 women from St. Mary's and is the first church-based team that Luton Community Chaplaincy has sponsored. The agreement is that our Chaplains would be available to care for the people who might come in our door each Wednesday with prayer or a listening ear.

Having the doors open each Wednesday with an 11:00 service as well, has meant that a small community began to form. We also had several people coming in with a desire to get to know Jesus better which has led to relationships developing and an Alpha Course and Baptisms in 2022.

There have also been the people who come most Wednesdays who want to see the building and those conversations help develop an understanding of the mission of St. Mary's.

Weekly there have also been people who come in who have deep problems that having someone available to hear them or to pray has been fruitful. As restrictions ease, the hope is that the Chaplains will also help in serving refreshments after the service.

## OCCASIONAL OFFICES

During 2021, there were 10 baptisms and no confirmations.

There were 3 weddings.

Our clergy officiated at 7 funerals, including that of Doris Weir.

## LEADERSHIP & OPERATIONS

### PCC SECRETARY REPORT

*by Angela Symonds*

*Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - - .*

The topics which dominated our thinking this year have been:

1. St Matthew's Parish joining St Mary's to make one large Parish - The Parish of Luton.
2. Keeping up to date with all our Safeguarding policies
3. Covid and following
4. Redirections for the church

1. We felt for the people of St Matthew's as we kept up to date with how St Matthew's Hightown parish was being absorbed into Luton Parish, and the building handed over to the Diocese and the Romanian Orthodox church began to use the building.

2. It was good to have Dawn and Ruth with us to keep us up to date with Children's work, and help us think about how to reintegrate the Primary age group, and Bethany Whiting and Tom Connolly from Youth as, with the help of Martin Watson and Adam Whiting, we renewed and updated our Safeguarding policies.

3. The week of our first PCC meeting of the year the National Covid death figures topped 100,000 and the whole year was overshadowed by the continuing Covid situation. At the same time, we were thinking through what should be our personal and our Church's response to this as well



as thinking how the church should navigate coming out of Covid and returning to a new kind of normality. A symbol of this was the TREE of HOPE.

4. As we moved gradually from online services to a hybrid format, we needed to decide how to Respond, help everyone Recover and heal, then to Reshape some things and Renew others, so that we will be able better to face the future. We decided that the 9.00am service should be 50 minutes and that the 10.30am service should aim for 55 minutes to include Bible study that is Fun and Relevant, as well as Worship and Community time.

Positively, we are seeing some in the 20+ age group come to Christ. Next year we will be running an Alpha course, followed by Baptisms and Confirmations, and hopefully will begin a 20s-30s group.

One PCC meeting was spent discussing RARE - the importance of Relationships over problems, Actions coming from our Christian selves over selfishness, connections with others (being Relational) and God over getting bogged down or lonely, and each of us being built up in Christ to Endure hardships as we face life's difficulties.

We also thought about complex current issues in our society to which the church as a whole and each of us individually must respond Christianly; issues of sexuality, race, poverty, climate change, dealing with the Pandemic, Drugs, and Abuse. We realised that we needed to be a community that is safe, trauma aware, culturally sensitive and inclusive.

With the principles of Truth and Grace, currently we are trying to see God's leading, to notice, not just the people coming into church, but the flow. We want to be 'person-centred', and to come together in community, as we try to build a church that is *Simple, Sustainable, and Joyful* as we are GODWARD, PASTORAL and MISSIONAL.

Finally, here are some snippets from our last meeting of 2021:

1. The church must be relevant, reaching people locally and speaking language they understand.
2. How can we use the heritage of our wonderful building, and of faith over the centuries here in Luton?
3. We need a successful social space for the community and ourselves, balanced with a Holy place of worship.
4. Are our 900 years celebrations the opportunity to put St Mary's on the map by making St Mary's a cultural centre?
5. We were especially concerned to know what God wants us to do and would like to have a specific prayer meeting for this purpose in January.

6. We will be celebrating the Queens Jubilee at Pentecost.

## WARDENS' REPORT

*by Sue Carter*

During 2021 Covid restrictions continued to feature. We were able to gradually open up the services, starting with the 9am service. Everyone was encouraged to wear a mask, and use a hand sanitiser as they came in. Seats remained 'Socially Distanced' and we got used to sharing the peace by waving and looking at each other. Communion has remained of one kind only, with only the celebrant drinking from the cup. Gradually as restrictions were lifted, some people decided not to wear a mask and by Christmas we moved the stacking chairs back to the hall and brought our original chairs back into position in the church.

We have appreciated the flexibility of the lightweight stacking chairs and a small working group has been tasked to help us choose new stacking chairs to replace all the heavy chairs. With more flexibility in moving the chairs, we anticipate the church building will be used for more events.

The 9am service continues to be live streamed and there are some regular members of the church who watch this every week. Initially we were not allowed to sing, so our organists, Andrew Rodell and John Spurgeon played the hymns as we looked at the words in the hymn books. Now we are singing again accompanied by the organ. The 10.30 service was reintroduced during the year with Young Church starting up again. We have noticed that some church members & families did not return initially, but gradually numbers have been creeping up.

Welcome Wednesdays started midway through the year from 10.00-13.00, staffed by the St Mary's Community Chaplains. A short service is held at 11am. We have seen the numbers of those attending gradually increase during the year. Some of the people coming in have wanted to find out more about the Christian faith & have come asking questions.

Our curate Nick Mwandia, who was based at St Matthew's, left in January. He was installed on 14 February as Interim Priest-in-Charge, St Andrew's Church Woodside. In October we welcomed Andy Pike as he joined the team as Associate Curate for one day per week. Josh Hodson and his family moved to Sweden towards the end of the year and we are grateful for the work that Josh did in setting up the streaming.

- To strip out and replace the timber gutter to the South Parapet gutter.

- Lead burning repairs that need doing to roll ends and a couple of patch repairs.

Unfortunately, there is further work that was quoted for that they have not yet completed. This includes the repairs to the stonework of the tower. During the year St Matthew's Church has gradually been closed, with services ceasing to be held there. Some of the St Matthew's congregation have started worshipping at St Mary's, others have found churches nearer to where they live. Ian Rowlands was employed to do a lot of the work involved in closing the church. Towards the end of the year, the Romanian Orthodox Church started using the church and they now have a long lease on the property which they are renting from the diocese. About 250-300 Romanians gather there to worship each Sunday bringing new life back into the building.

Along with the amalgamation of St Matthew's & St Mary's parishes, the PCC became trustees of the Agnes Poulton Trust for 'The poor people of the parish'.

Our grateful thanks to the staff team for all their hard work through another difficult year. To Mike Jones, our Vicar, to Ulrike Hunt as our Church Administrator, to Lesley Shrosbree - Administrator; to Eleanor Hearing our Hospitality Co-ordinator, and to Marsha Dorgan-Bratt our cleaner.

## FABRICS AND ORNAMENTS

*by Anthony Moss*

### Quinquennial inspection works done in 2021

You will have all seen the scaffolding around the tower. This was needed for tower roof repairs. This has now been completed. After commencing work for the original quoted job, our contractor - Lodge and Sons saw that further works were needed. This was always going to be a possibility. These were approved. Once the lead-worker arrived on site, further repairs were identified and authorised.

The actual work done is summarised below. The results are shown in the page of photos that follow.

- Stripping out and replacing the timber gutter to the South Parapet tower gutter
- Lift Tower east parapet leadwork to gutter and timber work below.
- Re-make timber work and re-lay new lead.

- Strip out the lead bay to the NE corner and investigate that adjacent to the door. Replace the timber and lay new lead to the gutter.
- Remove sump, cutting carefully around the outlet hole to leave the pipe in place. Install timber base and lead sump allowing a sleeve to go inside the existing pipe.
- Also included is the additional breaking out of the concrete base to the parapet gutter to allow the timber to go back in.

tairs at the very top. There are also a couple of other repairs a) Rake out and re-point flashing to NE corner above sacristy and b) Repair the area of flash banded repair above Hoo chapel with new lead, that also need doing. I'm informed that this will be done when the weather is less cold.

For the avoidance of doubt, all above work is being paid for by the Friends.

### Other major work

- Church Hall roof - faulty joints in the copper sheets causing leaks - repaired by NH Asphalte by applying felt strips together with specialised liquid sealant. This was also kindly paid for by the Friends.
- 34 Wychwood Avenue - Single storey roof to rear of property - replacement felt roofing supplied and installed by NH Asphalte

Photos (see over page)

1. Repaired East gutter
2. North East Corner showing sump
3. East Gutter and Channel
4. Also East gutter and Channel
5. South gutter
6. Lead Patch repair
7. Another lead patch repair
8. Repairs to lead roll ends on Steeple

## DEANERY SYNOD

*by John Spurgeon*

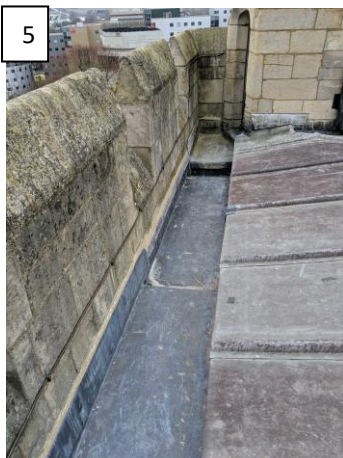
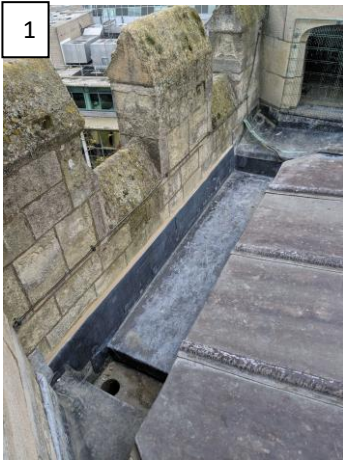
Deanery Synod met in February, June, October and November 2021, being legally able to meet in person for the latter two dates. Peter Adams, from St Mary's, remained the Lay Vice-Chair throughout but Synod were shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Valerie Dallinger, our long-standing Secretary in October. At the time of writing we are seeking a new Secretary, with the Area Dean heading up the extra work pro tem.

The context of each meeting is usually set by the host incumbent, but the Area Dean excelled himself by managing to bring in one of the first Christian martyrs, Polycarp at one meeting. On the other hand, those who were anticipating experiencing high church practices at St Hugh's were disappointed by the masterly (or should we say, fatherly) restraint of the vicar, leaving the head table unprepared for the brevity.

The main speakers/subjects were as usual varied. Paul Davies, Archdeaconry Church Growth Officer, spoke on an "asset-based approach to church growth". Synod broke into groups to discuss our own personal assets we could bring to the table and then identifying which persons or groups our churches could align with to transform the local community to reflect more of the Kingdom of God. Certainly, the older models of church are being set aside as the main way forward. God wants to grow our churches and has already given us enough to get started.

Peter chaired the presentation on the Deanery MAP in the June meeting. This would eventually go to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee. Luton Deanery was complex even before Covid, with a wide variety of local groups and partnerships as well as diversity of traditions and a large parish share deficit. Yet even the Diocese recognised that Luton Deanery had been working well over 12 years. After more group work there was a general sense of excitement after the pandemic, yet a need to be prayerful in the challenges. On the subject of the parish shared deficit, the Treasurer advised that one fifth of the Diocesan shortfall was from Luton (excluding the historic deficits from Biscot and St Matthew's), but the Diocese had managed to find the money to write this off - this cannot be expected next year.

Christian Cole, Diocesan Youth Minister, presented to the October meeting on "Faith in Young People". We needed to include teenagers as well as younger children and new approaches were called for. The Diocese and Youthscape can offer training and support for volunteer led youth provision.



Interestingly, the new incumbent at St Francis was previously Youth Minister in Dover. Indeed, this meeting was “introduced” to a whole raft of new posts holders from Jo Kelly-Moore (Dean of St Albans Abbey) to our own Andy Pike.

Finally, there was no main item of business in the November meeting, but rather updates on a range of local matters and work. Nigel Richards (Streatley) is now chaplain at Keech and will be interviewing prospective volunteer chaplains, and the Area Dean will invite Jessica Rowlands to speak on the Town Centre Chaplaincy. We were already aware from previous reports that the Airport Chaplaincy is still finding its feet as operations slowly return to a new normal and that a start had been made to recruit chaplains for the ambulance team.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

by Anne Adams

The Finance Team (a small team reporting to PCC) met throughout 2021. It was a busy year with a lot of work being done behind the scenes. What are the headlines?

- We continued to see the impact of the pandemic on both our income and on our expenditure.
- Our income from the giving of church members has continued at broadly the same level as last year. Thank you to all who give generously and regularly, it is such a blessing and much appreciated.
- Our income from cash giving during services has reduced, mainly because patterns of church attendance and use of cash has changed. Please do consider giving by cash or using our contactless payment machine if you are unable to give regularly. All gifts, large or small are important and appreciated.
- Our income from hiring our hall and other spaces was increased on 2020. Thanks to all who work hard to make this happen.
- Some of our income comes from the rental of other property. One of these is the old church hall in Inkerman Street. The lease was due for renewal in 2021. The tenants left and a new tenant has been found. They have not been able to take up their tenancy yet due to some delays around utilities and building compliance. Hence there has been little income during 2021 from this asset.
- Some funds have been raised by sale of books and marmalade as well as recycling ink cartridges and use of Amazon Smile and easyfundraising. Thanks for all these initiatives.
- Our expenditure was very well controlled, mainly because church activity was different

due to the pandemic and the diligence of budget holders. Our utility costs, parish share and staff costs are our largest items of expenditure.

A major change during 2021 was the merging of St Matthew’s Parish with St Mary’s parish. The St Matthew’s accounts were merged into St Mary’s accounts for the whole year. During the year St Mary’s held responsibility for the running of the St Matthew’s building and Ian Rowlands was contracted to help us accomplish this work. Responsibility for that building has passed to the Diocese and now the financial matters of the St Matthew’s parish are fully absorbed into the enlarged “Parish of Luton”. The merging process has meant that the enlarged parish has taken in the designated funds from St Matthew’s parish as well as a couple of trusts and small charities; at the same time bearing the running costs for 2021. Thank you to all who worked on this - it was a complex and detailed process.

So, you may ask, what is the bottom line? Overall, we ended the year with a total deficit of £23,000. Our church operating deficit was £16,000. This was better than we had budgeted at the beginning of the year - but in the Covid year it had been very difficult to forecast what would happen financially.

This continues our trend of deficits for the last four years. Throughout 2021 finance team and PCC have been discussing ideas around increasing income by looking at different income streams. This is in the context of the opportunities that will come to the church because of local developments and changes. The challenge belongs to all of us as a church. Let’s continue to seek God in our financial matters and exercise faith, creativity, generosity, stewardship and gratitude.

Finally, a big thank you to all who work on our financial matters whether directly or indirectly - it is much appreciated. Special thanks to Andrew Rodell, our Hon Treasurer, and to our auditors (Miller and Co).

## ELECTORAL ROLL FIGURES

by Lesley Shrosbree

In 2021 we had 153 people on the electoral roll, of which 142 live outside the parish. This is 10 people less than in 2019.

Year	In Parish	Out of Parish	Total on Roll
2017	5	179	184
2018	5	170	175
2019	8	155	163

2020	11	142	153
2021	11	145	156

St. Matthew's had 28 people on the electoral roll.

## WHO WAS WHO AT ST MARY'S: STAFF AND VOLUNTEER CHANGES IN 2021

by *Ulrike Hunt*

**Incumbent:** Mike Jones

**Clergy:** Mike Jones Chris Adams, Catherine Moss, Andy Pike was licensed on 4th October 2021.

**Churchwardens:** Anthony Moss and Sue Carter

**PCC elected members:**

The PCC is made up of 12 members, plus clergy, church wardens as well as representatives of General Synod and Deanery Synod.

On the PCC following the 2021 APCM were

*Retiring in 2022:* Andrew Rodell, Anne Adams, Chantal O'Donnell, Penny Fisher

*Retiring in 2023:* Gordon Shrosbree, Dawn Mortimer, Richard Bratt, Angela Symonds (PCC secretary)

*Retiring in 2024:* Ruth Boctor, Yasmin Milligan, Thomas Connelly, Bethany Whiting.

**General Synod:** Peter Adams

**Deanery Synod (retiring 2023):** John Spurgeon, Cathy Nobles, Clive Barratt.

**Service Facilitators:** emerging from the Covid lock-down, we combined the role of Sunday Manager and Assistant Sunday Manager into the role of Service Facilitator. They support the welcomers on a Sunday morning to welcome people coming in, especially those who are with us for the first time. They also ensure legal aspects of the service, such as counting people at each service, is done. They also keep an eye on the door for security.

Service Facilitators are: Anne Adams, Anthony Moss, Cathy Nobles, Clair Griffin, Sue Carter, Ulrike Hunt

**Welcomers:** This team welcomes people on a Sunday morning. Crucially they welcome newcomers and visitors, guiding them to their seats, letting them know where the toilets are and helping them know what is on for the children. They also do an amazing job at introducing newcomers to more established members of the congregation in order to create connection and belonging. In some churches, in the past these were called sidespeople. The welcomers are: Albert Timson, Angela Symonds, Chantal O'Donnell, Lesley Grierson-Hill, Margaret Birtwhistle, Paul Parson, and Richard Bratt

**Welcoming Wednesday:** the chaplains from the Luton Community Chaplaincy and volunteers from St Mary's who run this weekly are Anne Adams, Cathy Nobles, John Spurgeon, Margaret Birtwhistle, Marsha Dorgan-Bratt, Ruth Boctor and Yasmin Milligan.

**Sacristans:** Sacristans work behind the scenes to prepare communion each week. Our sacristans are Lorna Davitt and John Mascoll

**S.A.S:** the wonderful people who sort out our screens, audio and streaming each week are Adam Whiting, Alan Holmes, Daniel Noble, Graham Eaton, Jason Hunt, Joseph Adewale, Martin Watson, Mike Jones, Paul Connelly. We also had Josh Hodson before he moved to Sweden in September 2021.

**Refreshments:** in 2021 we did not have refreshments at church, due to Covid restrictions.

**Flowers:** the flower arrangements we see around church were put together by Jennifer Randall.

**Various volunteers:** we are very thankful for various people in our congregation who help with odd jobs that needed doing. Notably, Yasmin Milligan, who litter picks our church yard on a regular basis.

**Young Church Team leaders and helpers:**

Young Church is led by Dawn Mortimer, Eleanor Savage and Ruth Boctor with help from: Anna Noble, Fiona Duggan, Lisa Tull, Simon Shirley, Mike Jones, Ruth Jones

**Youth leaders:**

The youth team, headed up by Adam Whiting, is Fiona Duggan, Josh Hodson, Titilayo Adewale, Tychique Chiamala, Ulrike Hunt . We also had the support of Feast youth worker Kristina Druce to help run Impact.

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## CONTACT DETAILS

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Facebook: [facebook.com/stmarysluton](https://facebook.com/stmarysluton)

Youtube: [www.youtube.com/c/StMarysLuton](https://www.youtube.com/c/StMarysLuton)

**Bank:** *Barclays Bank plc*

**Independent Auditor:** *Miller & Co*

**Investment Advisers:** *Brewin Dolphin Bell Lawrie Ltd*

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

**PCC Constitution:** The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006) and a charity, previously exempted but now registered with the Charity Commission.

PCC meets 6 times during the year; The Church Oversight Group (COG) meets monthly, chaired by the incumbent and acts as a reference group, also reporting to PCC. The **Churchwardens** meet regularly with the vicar and they are supported by a team of appointed **Assistant Wardens**.

**Church Wardens:** These are key members of the church with important responsibilities. There are two wardens who are elected every year by what is called the Vestry Meeting. This happens at the start of the annual meeting. They are on the church council (PCC).

**PCC Members:** Members of the PCC are either ex-officio (Clergy, Churchwardens and General Synod, Diocesan Synod and Deanery Synod Representatives); elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) or co-opted in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Most PCC members are appointed at the APCM. The number on PCC is determined by Church of England rules as follows: 6 representatives where the electoral roll (ER) is less than or equal ( $\leq$ ) to 50; 9 representatives when  $ER \leq 100$ ; and a further 3 representatives for every 100 (or part thereof) up to a maximum of 15. Our ER is between 101-199 so we have up to 12 places for laity on the PCC to be nominated at the APCM. Church Representation rules require about 1/3 of members retire each year so we elect people so that no more than 4 are scheduled to retire on any given year.

As mentioned above, also on PCC are members of **Deanery, Diocesan and General Synod**. We have up to three lay representatives on **Deanery Synod** (the number for church sized 100-199). They are elected every three years. We also have one member of **General Synod** (a national body of the C of E). Our PCC membership is therefore: 12 nominated by APCM; 2 wardens; 3 deanery synod representatives; 1 General Synod representative plus the clergy. Membership lists and vacancies are shown later.

**Subcommittees and working parties:** By law, the PCC has a sub-committee to help the day to day running of St Mary's, which is the Standing Committee, which rarely meets. It has the power to transact the business of PCC between its

meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. It is comprised of the Vicar, Lay Vice Chair, Wardens and Treasurer. We also have 3 subcommittees: Buildings, Finance and Missions.

**Risk Management** - is done by PCC, Incumbent, Building Committee, Wardens, Staff and other members.

**Accounting Policy:** The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting policies on an accruals basis except for investments which are at market value and comply with statutory requirements and the PCC's governing document, the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, the Charities Act 2011, Accounting and Reporting by Charities - the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued on 16 July 2014 (as updated through Update Bulletin 1 published on 2 Feb 2016) and the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

## FAQ: UNDERSTANDING THE C OF E

One question we get asked is how does the local church fit into the national Anglican Church?

**Firstly, we are not funded from the national church. As a church we have to fund ourselves.**

We are structurally a part of the Church of England which is organised into two halves called provinces; each led by an archbishop. We are in the Southern Province led by Archbishop of Canterbury;

Each province is built from dioceses. We are part of the Diocese of St Albans. Each diocese has deaneries: we are part of the deanery of Luton. The clergy from each deanery meet together monthly for a packed lunch (no expense spared!). Luton's deanery works well together and has "deanery values". Each deanery is divided into parishes.

The parish vicar and the bishop, are responsible for the 'cure of souls' in their parish. That includes everyone. And this explains why parish priests are so involved with the key issues and problems affecting the whole community.

A classic Anglican expression is that the Church of England is "episcopally led (there are 108 bishops) and synodically governed." St Mary's members are on Deanery Synod (matters around Luton), Diocesan Synod (matters around St Alban's Diocese) and General Synod (national matters).

**MIKE JONES (CHAIRMAN) MARCH 2022 ON BEHALF OF ST MARY'S PCC**