



APRIL 21, 2024
ST MARY'S LUTON ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

INTRODUCTION

By Mike Jones

2023 was a year of progress and growth for us at St Mary's.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone for your dedication, positive outlook, devotion to the Lord, continuous giving, and creativity. Each of us is precious in the eyes of the Lord, and together, we form the church.

I am immensely proud of what we, the people of St Mary's, have accomplished this year. The creativity, kindness, and competence demonstrated by our community have been truly remarkable. This year, our members John Mascoll and Peter Adams were honoured with awards, which stand as signs of the service we, as a church, continue to give to Jesus. Thank you for all the energy and initiative you have shown this year - by paid and unpaid brothers and sisters in Christ. Walking together has enriched my life, and I am confident in our future because I walk with you, and together, we walk with the Lord.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Despite staff pressures, including Long COVID and the lack of an assistant administrator, St Mary's Church has made significant progress in various areas:

(a) Exploring who we are: The church has been exploring our identity and values through discussions on "Who are we?" and emphasising a journey with the Bible. St Mary's is a place of generous orthodoxy, providing much unseen pastoral care. Preserving our historic evangelical heritage while being a presence for peace and conversation in discussions at deanery and national church level.

(b) Serving Luton and Mission: The Peace Centre and individual ministries have been working to serve the local community. Collaborating with The Feast has led to growth in trust across religious divides among youth.

The church actively works to overcome injustice. The Bishop of St Albans awarded John Mascoll, one of our churchwardens, with the Order of St Alban during evensong at St Albans Cathedral on September 23rd. This was an award given for his long and faithful service to the Lord, and to St Mary's. It was part of a journey of righting the wrongs of past injustice that John has suffered.

Peter Adams, Cathy Nobles and Mike Jones also are engaged in working for peace. The Archbishop of Canterbury awarded Peter Adams the Hubert Walter Silver Scarab beetle medal for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation at the

Lambeth Awards ceremony - a tribute to all his work towards Peace and Reconciliation.

Engaging Younger People and Planting New Congregations. We have been planning for a new service with the university which will launch in 2024. There is improved trust, mission and credibility through the Peace Centre, and engagement with Luton's young people through The Feast.

(c) Nurturing Young People and Families: The church has rebooted its 0-18 ministry to engage with families and provide relevant programming for children, which is key to a vibrant church and sustainable finance.

(d) Intimacy with Jesus: Worship services, The Retreat in Daily Life, prayer initiatives, and regular Bible reading emails facilitate a profound connection with Christ. The Holy Spirit is working in services, and people are journeying to faith through baptisms. Ijay Omotade has begun leading the worship after many years of service by Richard Cowling. We have experimented with worship nights with YWAM and have developments planned for 2024.

(e) Living Building: St Mary's is developing our hirings including the amazing concert by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the beginning of the year. Welcoming Wednesday continues to be a joy. It provides a safe and friendly presence in the town centre.

The church is exploring a coffee pop-up, heritage, and connecting with the football club. Networking with other major churches helps learn from others facing similar challenges.

(f) Building 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. As I think of the Men's Ministry, the Small Group Life, New Wine, Amazing pastoral support, and discipling people - all different aspects of our church life - I give thanks that all these initiatives have yielded fruit.

(g) A Locally Financed Fellowship. As a church we are a locally financed community. God provides, mostly through the generosity of his people. If you have worshipped with us for six months or more you are part of the St Mary's family - we would ask you to ask the Lord how you can help us and support us financially so that our worship and ministry can continue. We are not subsidised from outside so everything we do is financed from within.

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.

(h) What God is Doing. A profound point of the year was when the Bible verse “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” came into focus as prophetically we sense that this is both what is happening and what we are called to.

The church's commitment to healing nations informs our actions. Worship services, prayer, pastoral support are core to who we are while the living building efforts signal growth, sustainability, and desire to reach into the local community.

I'm so grateful for our diversity, energy, and initiative at St Mary's. I am grateful that you are journeying with us as we seek to follow the Lord.

It's been a privilege to work alongside you this year. Together, we've made a real difference, and I'm confident we'll continue to do so in the future, with the Lord as our guide. Thank you for all you do. Let's keep up the great work!

LOOKING UPWARD

WORSHIP

by Mike Jones

a) Sunday 9 am - our early gathering.

This is a quieter, more reflective service. It is a wonderful opportunity to encounter God through liturgy, sacrament, and stillness. The 50-55-minute service includes elements such as hymns and Holy Communion. We follow the lectionary with occasional topical series. Afterwards we chat together over tea and coffee.

Our monthly 9 am schedule has been:

1st Sunday - Holy Communion

2nd Sunday - Peace Service

3rd Sunday - Holy Communion

4th Sunday - Hymns at 9

5th Sunday - Holy Communion

Music

We enjoy beautiful music with Andrew Rodell, John Spurgeon, and Phoebe Yu playing organ. This year a lovely addition was Andrew Beale playing the cello during communion.

b) Sunday 10:30 am - with children and youth

Blending old and new styles of worship, we open the Bible together to learn more about God and how to live as Christians in the 21st century. We take time to reflect on where we are.

Our monthly term-time 10:30 am schedule was:

1st Sunday - All Age worship

2nd Sunday - Holy Communion & Peace Service

3rd Sunday - Morning Worship

4th Sunday - Holy Communion

5th Sunday - Variable

Young Church and Youth run concurrently with this service, other than on the 1st Sunday, when we were all together.

In 2023 we moved our crèche facility to the Meeting Room where you can now watch and hear the stream via Twitch (new for 2023).

Music

10:30am music has changed around with the Cowlings moving to Scotland. Thank you to Richard for all that you and the family did over so many years. We are now being led by Ijay who is leading us twice a month now. Thank you to everyone who serves. We plan to have a community choir for Easter Sunday 2024.

We have learned about using videos in worship. This reduces the pressure on our musicians, and we use it on All Age Sundays and other Sundays when needed.

c) Welcoming Wednesdays 11am

We have a devotional at 11am led by a wide range of people. Sometimes this is a service of the Word, other times, Holy Communion, or a devotional. The service is followed by the opportunity to sit together and have some refreshments.

d) Other Languages

Shona Language Service: This service started in autumn 2011 and is based around our members from Zimbabwe, who expressed a desire to worship in their own language. They meet on the 3rd Sunday afternoon of each month, with between 30 and 60 people attending.

OCCASIONAL OFFICES.

by Ulrike Hunt

During 2023, there were 6 baptisms for infants and children.

We also held 2 adult baptism services, with 9 adults baptised in those services: 5 people were baptized on 21st May 2023, at a joint service with Central Baptist Church; 4 young men were baptized on 6 August 2023, when we had baptisms outside in our church yard!

We also had a confirmation service on 22 October 2023, when 15 people (7 children, and 8 adults) were confirmed by the Bishop of Bedford.

We had 3 weddings in 2023.

Our clergy officiated at 8 funerals, including that of Ellen Ibbett and Jean Barker.

SCREENS-AUDIO-STREAMING (SAS)

by Adam Whiting

This year has been an exciting time of growth for our Audio, Visual and Streaming ministry. At the start of the year, we were inspired by the exceptional sound and visuals showcased by the Alchemic Sonic Environment and the Royal

Philharmonic Orchestra. It opened our eyes to the possibilities achievable with the right equipment and a willingness to learn.

As a team our focus has been on enhancing the worship experience, ensuring that everyone can participate fully, regardless of their circumstances. We have worked diligently to improve the projection of images and the audio quality for those watching our livestreams. While our improvements may not always be noticeable, we are constantly making small adjustments and testing new ideas week by week.

For our 9am service, we have continued streaming on YouTube. However, for the 10.30am service, we have transitioned to Twitch. This decision was made to reduce the risk of copyright infringement when using recorded worship music and to improve the experience for families in the crèche. We have set up a screen in the crèche, allowing parents to watch the service live and ensuring they can still engage in worship while caring for their little ones. We have also aimed to simplify our Audio, Visual and Streaming ministry, making it more accessible. By doing so, we can offer enhanced services for hirings and weddings, potentially increasing the church's income.

At its core, our ministry exists to support and enable worship. We are a team of ordinary people with jobs and responsibilities, and we may not always achieve perfection. However, our team has continued to grow, and we welcome anyone who feels called to contribute their skills or willingness to learn. Please reach out to Adam if you would like to join us and learn the basics of our technology. You don't need to be a tech expert, but a good ear and a desire to learn are essential.

As a reminder, our ministry encompasses:

Screens: Cueing up the next reading passage, song verse, or camera shot to be displayed on the monitors and projectors around the church.

Audio: Managing the sound desk, mixing sound from preachers, readers, service leaders, singers, and musicians.

Streaming via YouTube/Twitch: Enabling those who cannot attend in person to continue worshipping from the comfort of their homes and providing a bank of recorded services for later viewing.

We have exciting ideas in the pipeline that will further enhance the experience and flexibility of our ministry. Keep an eye out for these developments in the next year or two.

LOOKING ACROSS CHURCH

YOUNG CHURCH, ALL AGE AND SCHOOLS TEAM

YOUNG CHURCH

by Ruth Boctor

We have had regular Young Church three Sundays a month for the past fourteen months.

Emily Shepherd was with us at the beginning of 2023 but sadly had to finish her commitment.

We have had 3 leaders. Eleanor Savage, Titilayo Adewale and myself, along with a regular rota of volunteers recruited by Ulrike.

Finding enough helpers, as always, has been a struggle for young church in 2023, so we are very grateful to Simon Shirley and Carol Stevens who have remained a constant support throughout the year.

We have had between 12 - 21 children at sessions averaging about 15 each week from a variety of ethnic backgrounds reflecting very much the church community at St Mary's.

The age range was 3-11 years so broad and maybe the biggest challenge was making YC appropriate and fun for this wide age range.

We covered different characters in the Bible, looking at the way God used them. We have used Energize material from Urban Saints and included games and craft ideas from other sources. Energize is very good in terms of applying the stories. Angela Symonds joined our leadership team in September which has been a great help. We have now recruited a new family worker, Katie Smith, so we look forward to seeing YC develop further in this coming year.

SCHOOLS TEAMS

by Andy Fisher

The schools work has continued to grow during 2023. The team were very busy with Christingle services before Christmas. We have had several schools visit St Mary's, but a special link has been fostered with Linden Academy within the parish. This has included school assemblies and visits to the church.

YOUTH

by Adam Whiting

2023 was a better year following the difficulties of 2022. Adam was back in action full time and was working hard to relight the fire in the youth ministry. In January the youth embarked on the return of the Youth Weekend Away! 18 young people and 6 leaders went away to Felden Lodge in

Hemel Hempstead for a weekend full of activities and worship.

We welcomed some new volunteers to the team in 2023. Casper Muller joined us in September and Ellis Wang joined us in October. Both are strong members of the team and are essential to the delivery of the youth ministry.

Sunday youth continued to be headed up by Fiona Duggan with support from Adam. It has been supported by Tychique Mundy, Jean Godden, Casper Muller and Andy Fisher, while Peter Hunt stepped into the role of young leader. Sunday youth looked at a whole range of topics this year including the exploration of 'What Is God's Plan for Me?' and 'Where is God in the hard times.' We welcomed the year 6's up a little early this year to take the pressure off young church and they have been a real asset to youth, bringing a totally different dynamic to the ministry.

'Impact' continued in partnership with 'The Feast' with Adam Whiting and Kristina Druce heading this up with support from Tychique Mundy, Ulrike Hunt, Jean Godden, and Ellis Wang. This year Impact has grown and become more inclusive than ever, with more young people from various backgrounds and different faiths finding Impact a safe place for them to grow in community with one another. We regularly have 20 young people every week with more coming as they promote it to their friends. We still eat together once a month and have spent time journeying through different dialogue methods that help us communicate our opinions effectively without talking negatively about others. We are looking to expand Impact in 2024 into a much bigger project.

In summer this year, St Mary's youth ministry partnered with Luton Unite (a collection of churches and Youthscape) to attend a summer camp together. This is the first one that we have physically been to since before Covid, so much of the youth had never been to a camp before. We decided to attend Satellites which is led by the Youthscape team. In the end we, along with Luton Unite, took over 40 young people which meant we had an amazing time, even if one of the marquees did take off in the tornado speed winds on the second day. Huge thanks to the youth team for supporting the decision to go with Luton Unite, especially to Olly and Fiona Duggan who catered for the more than fifty people in the group. The youth got so much from this camp that we have decided, and are already making plans, to go again in 2024 with an even bigger group! I know, we must be mad!

Later in the year, we had a very busy December. We joined the University carol service and the Luton Unite Christmas ball, as well as our own Christmas special. The Christmas ball welcomed

over a hundred young people to it which was incredible to see and our Christmas special was amazing.

Looking into 2024 we have some exciting plans coming up including restarting our digital youth ministry.

Every year I like to add a small note to say I am so proud of this youth ministry! From the volunteers that give their time to the young people's resilience I am so blessed to be able to work with these amazing people. I am so proud of each and every one of them and can see this cohort of young people being the church leaders of tomorrow.

PASTORAL CARE

by Sue Carter (Pastoral Care Pastor)

The Pastoral Care Team has continued to meet about every four weeks both in person and via Zoom. The Pastoral Team consists of Mike Jones, Ulrike Hunt, Chris Adams, Anne Adams, Margaret Birtwhistle & Sue Carter, and more recently Joseph Adewale. Margaret joined us mid-year with responsibility for our older members. (She is also helping Alison Elliott with the Seekers small group.) Andy Pike is also informed of all pastoral issues. We pray for all those we have discussed at the end of the meeting.

Safeguarding issues is a regular item flagged up at each meeting. Martin Watson has continued to be our local Safeguarding Officer through this year.

The PrayerNet continues to be a way of communicating prayer needs to a group of about 30 people who have committed to pray for anyone in need. Prayer requests can be added via the Church Office, Sue Carter via the Pastoral phone (07483 898 276) or any members of the PrayerNet Team.

Rev Chris Adams has continued to take Home Communion to any who requests it.

Rev Dr Andy Pike has been hospital Chaplain throughout the year at the Bedfordshire Hospitals. Andy has been able to visit some of our members during their stay in hospital.

At Christmas some of our members who are not able to come to church at all or through the colder months of the year, were remembered with a small gift and a card from St Mary's. These were all hand delivered by the team and well received.

The 'St Mary's, Luton: Community' Facebook page continues to be a good way of sharing information and news. This is a closed group and only available to those who are or have been members of the church. Members of the church can request to join via Facebook.

We have encouraged members to add a jar or a tin to the Foodbank Box in the church through the

year if they can afford to, and for members who need help to take items from the box. Also, Robbie & Rachel Gill often bring a box or more of 'Best Before' food and flowers from M&S. Church members are encouraged to take what they need - or take it and give it away. Thank you to Robbie & Rachel for collecting it and bringing it to church.

The Pastoral Team now have a small amount of money donated by church members to help anyone who is struggling with heating bills or buying food. If you, or anyone in church that you know, would benefit from some money from this fund, please contact Sue Carter via the Pastoral phone or suecarter@stmarysluton.org

This year it is with sadness, that we remember those who are no longer with us but with the Lord.

Ellen Ibbett died 22.12.2022

Jean Barker died 9.6.2023

Gordon Savage died 29.8.2023

Sandy Crossman died 15.9.2023

John Wray (adult son of Hazel Wray) died 9.10.2023

Ken Rose died 6.12.2023

SMALL GROUPS

by Cathy Nobles

Small Groups in St. Mary's have always seemed to be a part of building our church community. Besides the groups that are listed below, there are many other informal groups that meet.

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

1. Community Bible Study meets on Wednesday at 7:30 pm.
2. Sunday Get Together Home Group meets on Thursday at 4 pm on zoom.
3. "The Seekers" group meets once a month in church.
4. The Calm Zone Group meets once a month.
5. The Men's Group has met three times for Men's Breakfasts and twice for a Curry Night. There was also a Men's weekend away.
6. Zoom Bible Study meets on Tuesday evenings at 8:00pm.
7. In Person Bible study meets on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm in church.

8. As we look to the future, my hope would be that more small groups would form so that anyone coming to the church on Sunday can find a smaller group to relate to during the week. It is a great way to help those who are new to St. Mary's meet new friends. As you can see from the groups listed above, there are lots of different types of small

groups. We have had a book club in the past, and perhaps you are interested in starting up a new book club. Small groups can form around hobbies and games whatever suits you and your ideas. It is a wonderful way to build our community.

Samples from the small groups:

Snippet from 'The Seekers'

by Alison Elliott

Our Small Group call ourselves 'The Seekers'. We continue to seek - and to find, however old we get. We never know it all!

During the last year we have continued to meet together once a month in the Church Lounge for fellowship (with each other and with God), prayer and Bible study, and for celebrations - we almost always find something to celebrate. There's the fact that we've made it to another meeting, of course, - and Christmas and Easter and somebody's Birthday most months - and this year we had the Coronation as well!

For the last few years, we have been blessed with Chantal O'Donnell's gift of teaching, but sadly she left last summer to move to an even more beautiful part of the country! We hope others will benefit from her gifting in due course.

Amazingly, (or, probably not, because I think God had it up his sleeve!) - Margaret Birtwhistle offered to come and join us, with all her invaluable gifting and experience. We are so grateful and pleased to have her.

We all continue to get a little bit older - and sometimes struggle with increasing ailments - and life in general, but we can keep in touch between meetings, to pray for each other and to support each other.

I'm really privileged to be a part of such a special group of people!

Men's Activity Weekend

by Andy fisher

In March 2023, twenty-eight men from St Mary's (and friends) went to Wells-next-the-Sea YHA for our annual activity weekend. We walked, cycled, and had fun and fellowship together. We all joined together for a wonderful, reflective service on the Saturday evening. In 2024 we plan to visit the YHA National Forest in October.

Two Bible Study Groups

by Angela Symonds

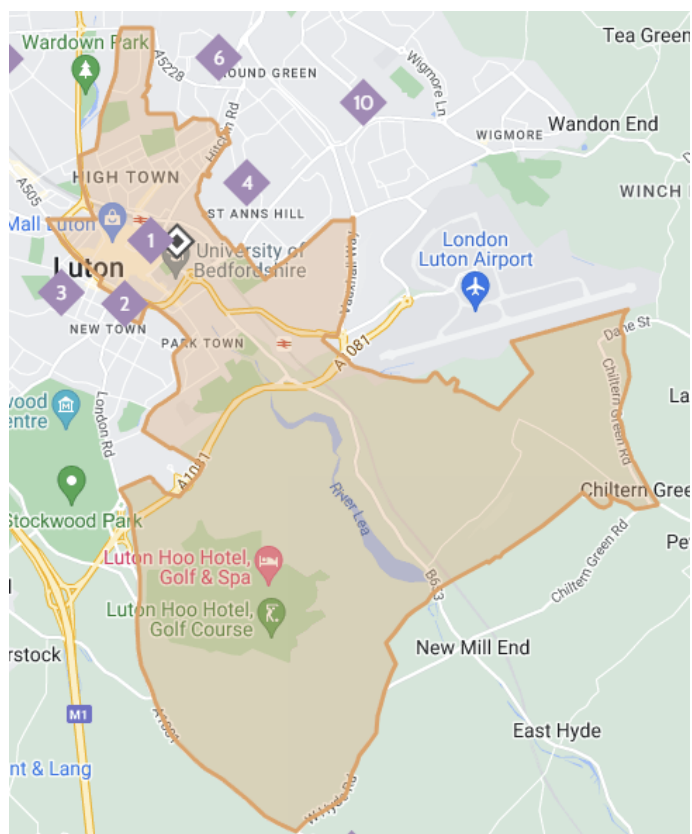
In 2023, our formerly 'Ladies' bible study group metamorphosed into two groups for anyone who would like to come, so men are welcome too. We

have an online Zoom group on Tuesday evenings, and an ‘in person group’ on Thursdays, meeting in the church. The two groups run parallel. Both groups are small - five or six in each, and we usually do some very enjoyable hard work on understanding the Bible. In line with the sermon series on Sundays, and with the help of Tom Wright’s books, we have worked through John’s Gospel and Ephesians. As we read, we also gain strength from the Holy Spirit working within us to keep us closer to Christ as we are constantly challenged to live our lives more and more in accordance with God’s word. The more we study the Bible, the more we realise the strength we get from Christ as a result. In 2024, initially, we are hoping to complete the book of Hebrews.

LOOKING OUTWARD

THE PARISH

This is the geographical parish incorporating the Town Centre, Hightown, the Luton Hoo Estate (below the river), and the Someries Castle area below the airport.



ST. MARY’S CHAPLAINCY

by Cathy Nobles and Anne Adams

The partnership between St Mary’s and Luton Community Chaplaincy continued for its third year, being centred around Welcome Wednesday each week.

The Chaplaincy team is made up of three women from St. Mary’s; this was the first church-based team that Luton Community Chaplaincy has sponsored. The agreement would be 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 11:00am service as well, has meant that a small community has formed. The service at 11:00am normally has an audience of 10-15. They are the regulars who then stay for fellowship.

We have seen this year a rise in the number of people coming to Welcome Wednesday with mental health issues. They have been able to sit down with one of the team and talk about these struggles and most have had prayer. There has been a steady influx of University of Bedfordshire students coming in to pray each week. Often in small groups of friends who are all wanting to spend time with God.

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.

ST MARY’S CENTRE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

by Peter Adams

After a slower pace of activity during and after Covid times, especially out and about in Luton and sometimes beyond, 2023 has proved to be a lot busier for us as we seek the ‘peace and welfare’ of our town and all in it.

Cathy, Mike and occasionally Peter led and preached in our monthly second Sunday Peace service. We continually seek to make our own inner peace, our peaceable responses to the ups and downs of life and all we do and say as Christians in Luton our core focus. While not badged under the theme of peace, our focus during Lent 2024 on the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be very much a part of that focus. The challenge to seek a peaceable approach to our discussion of sexuality, same sex blessings and the CofE’s LLF project in the church has been a key focus. Mike and Cathy also continue to pursue teaching and mentoring people in St Mary’s and way beyond on living joyful and peaceable lives.

Very active community protest, leafletting and very aggressive online activity by Patriotic Alternative (PA), Britain’s most extreme right group, early in the year outside The Old Palace Lodge Hotel in Dunstable where asylum seekers were being housed led to a packed meeting at

Dunstable Priory. Peter along with Martin Watson who was spending time with us as a part of his ordination training were asked to attend the meeting by the rector, to understand, mediate as needed and advise on future response. A lot of aggressive voices were followed by a very angry tirade to Dunstable MP Andrew Selous, and as a result an online recording went viral. PA continued to show up over the next few months, including leafletting in north Luton. This kept us busy in both towns as we and others kept an eye on the possibility of further protest and attack on the large number of asylum seekers being housed in Luton.

Knife crime in the town remains a problem, and our Phoenix made of knives from amnesty bins gives a focus to our activity. The death of a young man in Biscot in September 2023 led to many community meetings in which Peter was very involved. In July the possibility of a visit of the Knife Angel was raised and is now settled for summer 2024. The twenty-two-foot Angel made of tens of thousands of knives will be somewhere near the Town Hall, and our Phoenix will be his partner in focusing many in the town to the realities of this horrific issue in our community. Phoenix will be busy in 2024, also spending time at St Andrews in Blenheim Crescent where Rev Luke Lerner, the co-creator, is now vicar, and also two visits to Norwich where the parents of a young man who died two years ago aged 18 have become national activists on the issue.

Our other focus has been the Holy Land and the impact of war there on our Luton community. Cathy Nobles is a trustee of Musalaha, who work for reconciliation there, and we hosted three days of public meetings and conversations involving their director Daniel Munayer in June. Since the October 7th attack on Israel by Hamas and the subsequent invasion and war in Gaza the conflict has become the centre of our activity. Cathy continues to support the work of Musalaha in the land, but most of our activity has been here in the Luton community. Cathy has used her deep understanding and thirty years of experiencing the reality of the conflict as it works out in the lives of all in Israel and Palestine to running workshops for people to think about the conflict, first for our church but now also for other churches in Luton. Peter is spending a lot of time on community relations in Luton. All this work will continue to dominate our focus in 2024 as the war continues and its aftermath and the resulting ongoing fractured relations in our community and on the political landscape impact us, especially as elections loom.

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**. We are active members of **Churches Together In Luton** and we are on **Luton Council of Faiths**.

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 again been a very active year for the Foodbank and all donations of food are very welcome.

Luton Community Chaplaincy (LCC) was initiated by St Mary's and a number of our members are chaplains. There are chaplains in the Mall, the Town Hall, Asda 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. This work is also enabled by a small team of volunteers.

Mission Direct helps people to make a practical lasting difference to some of the world's most vulnerable people by going on short overseas mission trips. One of our members works for Mission Direct. In 2023 the Bishops Harvest Appeal showcased a Mission Direct project in Uganda. We were able to contribute £500 total to Bishop's appeal - a combination of congregational specific gifts and top up from Missions budget.

NOAH, which shows Christian care and compassion to the homeless of Luton 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. Our building acts as the base when pastors are on the streets.

The Feast - one of our members works for the Feast. The Feast brings together teenagers from different faiths and cultures to build friendships, explore faith and change lives. The Feast and St Mary's often work jointly with young people.

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. Some church members work or volunteer with Youthscape - Luton.

Tree House - this is the University Chaplaincy and during 2023 a new Chaplain was appointed. We hosted the annual University Carol Service and are working with the Chaplain to explore a joint project in 2024.

Missions Group: Michael and Sue Carter, Anne Adams, and Angela Symonds support our missionaries and decide on overseas missions giving.

St Mary's gives away 10% of undesignated church income to support mission, both within Luton and internationally. In 2023 we have given almost £13,000. Thus, we have supported three couples in their work, one couple based with Interserve in Birmingham, one in N E India and the other in the Philippines. Of the amount we give away, 10% is sent to provide disaster relief where needed. An amount has been sent for the Syrian earthquake relief and to Musalaha, working for peace in the Middle East.

We have also made donations to several organisations with whom we have links as they serve our town and those in need within it. Those organisations are Level Trust, NOAH, Mission Direct, Azalea, Youthscape, Luton Community Chaplaincy, The Feast, St Mary's Peace Centre, Wenlock School Deanery support fund.

LEADERSHIP AND OPERATIONS

LEADERSHIP

TRAINING

by Mike Jones

St Mary's continues to be a place for equipping and sending. This year has been a year of training and celebration for clergy and staff.

- Rev Dr Andy Pike is continuing his curacy. He is now a hospital chaplain as well as a psychologist in private practice. He is in his third year of curacy as an SSM (Self-Supporting Minister) and plans to stay on with us as Associate Minister.
- Rev Canon Joseph Adewale has moved from PTO (Permission to Officiate) to stipendiary curate for two years. He is an experienced priest transferring from Nigeria.
- Congratulations to Crispen Nyatsuro who has been ordained and is in SSM curacy.
- Martin Watson will be ordained in January 2024.
- I am thankful for all that Rev Chris Adams our retired minister does.

- Sadly, Rev Catherine Moss continues to pause her ministry at St Mary's because of ill health.

SAFEGUARDING

by Mike Jones / Trish Pinner

1. Introduction

Safeguarding is a strength at St Mary's not least due to the excellent work in this area over a long period by Martin and Sara Watson. They have trained Adam Whiting and the rest of the team. We have a rigorous DBS check regime.

Now that Martin has moved on to his curacy, we are thankful that Trish Pinner has taken over from the Watsons now as PSO.

Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at PCC.

Other Safeguarding Meetings: We regularly discuss safeguarding issues at the Pastoral Minister's Group (Rev Mike Jones, Rev Chris Adams, Rev Dr Andy Pike, Sue Carter, Anne Adams, Ulrike Hunt, Margaret Birtwhistle).

We work in line with Church of England Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

For case work we take advice from our PSO and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

2. Formal Obligation. PCCs are formally obliged to report to the APCMs on whether the PCC '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).' We have indeed done so.

3. Safeguarding Roles -

Details of Parish Safeguarding Officer: Trish Pinner. Contact her at:

safeguarding@stmarysluton.org

Details of DBS Recruiter and Verifier. Ulrike Hunt.

4. Safeguarding Policy, Guidance and Information -Details of Parish Safeguarding Policies here.

We refer to 5 policies.

National Policy Church of England: *Parish Safeguarding Handbook. Promoting a Safer Church.*

National Policy: Central Council of Bellingers (2015): *Safeguarding in Children in Towers*

Diocesan Policy: *Responding to Domestic Abuse*

Local Policy: *Safeguarding of Adults who are Vulnerable.* Edited and ratified March 2023.

Local Policy: *Safeguarding of Children.* Edited and ratified March 2023.

5. Safer Recruitment and People Management

Which areas of the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance are the parish compliant with?

The SGO (Safeguarding Officer) believes that we are compliant in all areas.

Which areas of the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance will the parish be focusing on going forwards?

The SGO believes that nothing needs to be acted on.

This year we are reorganizing after the change of PSO.

6. Opportunities, challenges and risks in safer recruitment and people management.

We deal with these issues as they arise.

Number of safeguarding concerns shared with Parish Safeguarding Officer. Two

7. Next Steps -What areas of safeguarding will the parish be focusing on?

We will continue to adjust what we are doing for safeguarding of vulnerable adults now that Margaret Birtwhistle has joined the team and develop our systems now that Trish Pinner has taken over from Martin Watson.

PCC SECRETARY REPORT

by Angela Symonds

Ephesians 4:32 - "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

PCC has been a happy place this year as two members were given special awards, and Rev. Joseph Adewale's visa was agreed, so he was licensed as our Curate on September 30th.

The Archbishop of Canterbury awarded Peter Adams the Hubert Walter Silver Scarab beetle medal for Reconciliation and Interfaith Cooperation at the Lambeth Awards ceremony on 22nd June - a tribute to all his work towards Peace and Reconciliation.

The Bishop of St Albans awarded John Mascoll, one of our Church wardens, with the Order of St Alban during evensong at St Albans Cathedral on September 23rd. This was an award given for his long and faithful service to the Lord, and to St Mary's.

We give thanks that the new chairs were in place before the May PCC meeting. An additional bonus is that the church is now much improved acoustically - hopefully making it more attractive to hirers.

After many hitches the hall heating is now up and running.

Safeguarding

We continued to focus on keeping up to date with safeguarding requirements, and updating all our policies, as a result, the Church of England has upgraded us to a Level 3 Conforming Church. We now have to keep up the good work.

Trish Pinner took over from Martin Watson as our safeguarding officer from December 2023

Bible and Prayer

A good week of prayer in January helped to focus our minds on reaching the extended parish. Hosting the Retreat in Daily life in October encouraged us to deepen our own walk with God. As well as other teaching, we also worked through John's Gospel and Ephesians in sermons during the year.

Peter Adams kept us updated on Power Court, the new Football Stadium and related developments, as well as continuing to think about how St Mary's should develop in the 21st century.

We continue to have a mini foodbank at the back of church that members of the congregation stock, and people can take from as they need.

Bishop Richard's visit in May only emphasised again what we already know - that Luton is one of the most multicultural towns in the UK, especially in having a high proportion of Muslims, and also that we live in one of the most deprived areas in the country, so, for us, the issues of poverty and homelessness are pressing.

In 2023, Church members took part in the LLF process and our clergy were not seeking to bless same sex couples. As a church we welcome all and we recognise that others will have a different position. In 2024 we will continue to clarify our position.

The congregation's financial support for a new Children and Family worker really encouraged us to go ahead with this, and Katie Smith joins us in the New Year.

DEANERY SYNOD

by John Spurgeon

Deanery Synod met in February, June, October and November 2023. Peter Adams, from St Mary's, remained the Lay Vice-Chair throughout and Christchurch has provided the secretarial support, the vicar being assistant Area Dean.

In February Sarah and James Hargreaves, from Engage Worship, gave a presentation of their work with local churches, where they had provided training and resources for use in worship, with the aim of engaging young people and families. Following the then recent vote in General Synod, the very topical subject of prayers for couples in same sex relationships was introduced by the Area Dean following a statement issued by the Diocesan Bishop. There could be no illusion about the depth of disagreement that existed amongst both the clergy and laity and the majority of Luton clergy might not want to use the prayers. When the prayers are authorised a public statement would be issued locally and a phone number provided for those enquiring about the prayers. Peter made a plea for unity and mutual understanding. Finally,

an update was provided on the number of asylum seekers in Luton and the challenges this presents. In June the Area Dean reported that there had been no feedback on Jairo Nyaongo's presentation on racial justice in our churches the previous November. The main business was a presentation by Azalea on the range of work that they cover with victims of sex-trafficking in Luton. Volunteers contact women on the streets, engaging them in conversations to build positive relationships which continued through one-to-one counselling and support. A related online mentoring service for men who wish to change their behaviour, Flint, was introduced through a video. Ruth emphasised the importance of faith and sharing the gospel in their work. All can be involved by volunteering and giving of funds and practical work. Finally, Peter thanked those who would be standing down from Synod this time.

We had an opportunity to visit Holy Trinity church, Biscot, in October, which is now within the new Parish of St Augustine with Holy Trinity (Biscot). Kate Ford, giving advisor for the Diocese, spoke of the range of support available to parishes in order to assist them in encouraging generous giving, stressing the importance of communication. There was also a report on the Cathedral Re-visioning process, which is a project to engage widely before drawing up a plan for the future. Sadly, Lynda Logan had to announce that she had left as East of England Ambulance Chaplain, not least because of the approach of the senior management to the chaplaincy service. Probably the most moving element of this meeting was the number of members who left the meeting afterwards, and walked the few hundred yards to the site of a recent fatal stabbing where they stood in sympathy with the mainly young people holding a vigil.

In November, Helen Burgess and Antoinette Mutabazi spoke on the University Chaplaincy service. This covers both campuses and is based at the Tree House Community and Faith Centre. It is Christian led but multi-faith and is now recognised as a student support service. There is a Christian Union but this has to be run by students who recruit a leadership team; unfortunately, this had not happened for this year. Churches could help the chaplaincy by providing new volunteers and prayer for inspiration and discernment. News was given from the various parishes including addressing the subject of safety of young people, the need for accommodation for asylum seekers now deemed homeless, and a new charity "Chaplaincy at London Luton Airport" will have been set up by the time this report is printed. Finally, Rev. Dan Drew (St Luke's) spoke of those who had helped us in growing in faith and how we should invest in youth work and training. Young

people were interested in their elders if we were interested in them. He saw a more strategic approach in the Deanery as churches work together to develop a joint strategy and employ a programme and oversight manager for Luton, using some of the significant available CofE strategic funding.

A key focus for synod over the coming year will be the nationally funded Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SSMIB funded Luton project). Its overall focus is the churches of Luton but with strong focus on St Mary's and its place in the fast-regenerating town centre. Its aim is to help the church in Luton to be healthy and growing in our diverse town.

OPERATIONS

SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR REVIEW

by Ulrike Hunt

2023 was a very full year.

We are thankful that the staff team was on the whole healthy and functioning well throughout 2023 after a 2022 where there was a lot of sickness and staff absence.

Our staff and volunteer team looks very different from the team in 2022.

Emily Shephard left us in January 2023, having realised the role of Children and Family worker was not for her. We appointed Jay Huffman in May as an Assistant Administrator. Unfortunately, this also didn't work out and Jay left us in November 2023. John Mascoll joined the staff team as warden in April 2023 and Joseph Adewale joined us as curate in the summer.

More volunteers joined different teams such as the welcome team, the chalice team and the sacristans team, as well as the young church and youth teams.

ELECTORAL ROLL FIGURES

by Ulrike Hunt

We had 188 people on our published 2023 electoral roll, of which 166 live outside the parish. This is an addition of 1 person from our 2022 published electoral roll.

Year	In Parish	Out of Parish	Total on Roll
2019	8	155	163
2020	11	142	153
2021	11	145	156
2022	19	168	187
2023	22	166	188

HIRINGS REPORT

by *Ulrike Hunt*

Various people hire our building for all sorts of events - workshops, classes, concerts and much more. The hiring of our building provides the church with valuable income, much needed in order to be able to maintain our amazing building.

We started off the year hosting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for a week, culminating in an amazing musical experience on 8th January 2023. We also hosted the London Movie Orchestra at a candle-lit concert in March, the Vauxhall Male Voice Choir in June, and a sound art event (Equinoks) in September.

We continued to host the Luton Music Club, who put on concerts regularly on a Monday evening, as well as Salsa dancing on a Thursday evening.

The hall has been hired for meetings and workshops on a number of occasions, including by Luton Borough Council. Having a warm hall in the autumn certainly makes a huge difference!

The hirings committee (Andrew Beale, Ulrike Hunt and Jay Huffman) met several times over the year and at the end of the year added Anthony Moss and Steve Hudson to their number.

We are acutely aware that we need to increase our capacity to manage hirings as well as to market ourselves as a location for conferences and events. To this end, we will be appointing an Events Coordinator in 2024.

WARDENS' REPORT

by *Sue Carter*

Services

In 2023 the congregation has continued to grow slowly with a greater diversity of nationalities worshipping together. The 9am service is a more traditional robed service, with liturgy, hymns played on the organ. (Thanks to Andrew Rodell and John Spurgeon, with Phoebe Yu filling in when Andrew and John are not available). The service has a fairly stable congregation of 35-40 people. Thank you to our refreshments team (who set up at 7.30am!) and have hot drinks available before and after the early service, so that the two congregations can meet.

The 10.30 service has morphed into the 10.40 service, which is when the majority of the congregation have arrived!

Welcome Wednesday continues steadily to have about 15 people to the short devotional service at 11am each week. During the course of the morning others come in and out of the church, some to look around, others to pray quietly and others to speak to members of the team.

In March 2023 we held a 'Service of Remembering' for those who had lost loved ones.

Worship at St Mary's - we have lost several of our musicians over recent years and finally the Cowling family moved to Scotland in the summer, leaving us with few who could lead us. (Thank you Richard for the years you have led us in worship with other members of the Cowling Family!) From the autumn onwards, we started to use recorded music for two Sundays a month. It seems to be working well with musicians playing for the other two weeks.

Shared Meals We have enjoyed several Bring & Share meals in the hall during the year as well as the Seder Meal on Maundy Thursday

The King's Tree On the day following the King's Coronation, we invited Susan Lousada, The Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, to come and ceremonially plant an Oak Tree - *Quercus robur Fastigiata*, to celebrate this occasion. The Lord Lieutenant then joined us for the 10.30 service when she was able to answer questions from the children and young people about the Coronation Ceremony which she had attended the day before.

DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) Applications - we were finally given permission to replace the upholstered wooden chairs for the new lightweight stackable chairs for the church. The old chairs were given to churches in Marsh Farm and Husborne Crawley who were delighted to receive them. The new chairs were first used for the Friend's Concert in the summer when Luton Youth Music performed in the church. The feedback after the concert was very positive, with people saying that the acoustics had improved with the new chairs. We are appreciating the versatility of the building. Because of the new chairs, there are increased bookings from hirers!

The hall boiler was installed in the autumn, with improved heating to the offices as well as the hall.

Heritage Days have included tours of the building as well as Tower Tours led by Peter Adams. Peter led a group of people up & down the tower from Historic England. Views from the top are wonderful, and the view will continue to be interesting as the development of the Power Court site gets underway.

Bell Ringers During the year our bell ringers were very few in number, so Beryl Gardner appealed to the church over a couple of weeks for new members to come to a Bell Ringing Taster Evening in October. About a dozen people attended along with Local Radio Presenter, Roberto Perrone, who recorded the event which was put out on BBC 3CR the following day. Ringers from Caddington & Houghton Regis came to help on the evening. Bell ringing training has continued on Tuesday evenings at St Mary's with a core team of ringers each week.

Staff Team This year we have continued to see a few changes to our staff team.

Joseph Adewale from Nigeria became our curate. He was ordained in Nigeria where he had worked as Bishop's Chaplain. With so many from Nigeria in our congregation, it's great to have Joseph on team. He and his family are living in St Matthew's Vicarage.

Andy Pike continues as a Self-Supporting Minister (SSM) and will be finishing his curacy in summer 2024. Andy was appointed Hospital Chaplain at The Luton & Dunstable and Bedford Hospitals, working there part time, as well as continuing to work part time as a Clinical Psychologist.

Jay Huffman was appointed as an assistant administrator, but after the probationary period it was felt that he wasn't the right person for the job.

Ordinands

Crispen Nyatsuro was ordained as Deacon in June 2023 at St Albans Abbey and is now an SSM at The Church of the Transfiguration in Kempston.

Martin Watson was ordained as Deacon at St Paul's Church, St Albans in January 2024, delayed because of family circumstances. He will serve his curacy there.

Church Wardens

After 5 years as Church Warden, Anthony Moss stood down from that role, but continues to be very involved in the care of the buildings as our Warden Emeritus.

John Mascoll was elected as Church Warden in April along with Sue Carter.

We continue to be grateful to all the team for their hard work at St Mary's, to Mike Jones as Vicar, to Andy and Joseph as our curates, and to Chris Adams - our retired minister, and also to Adam Whiting our Youth Minister, Ulrike Hunt our Senior Administrator and to Marsha Dorgan-Bratt our church cleaner. We also thank all the church members who help to make church happen - too many of you to list!

Thank you all!

FABRICS AND ORNAMENTS (BUILDINGS REPORT)

by Anthony Moss

EXTENSIONS HEATING

If you remember last year's report, you'll recall that I was confident that there would be good news this year on the Hall and Extensions heating project. My confidence was well-founded! I'm pleased to say that in 2023 the system was thoroughly refurbished. A new more efficient boiler was installed; there are new, much quieter and better heaters in the hall itself and the foyer and there are radiators where there weren't

before - in the front office, the corridor and the Underground. In addition, the system is much easier to programme and control both for ours and the hirers' requirements. We are all very happy with it. A big win indeed!

HALL LIGHTING

The hall lighting was in serious need of improvement. A number of the incandescent strips had failed. The replacement of these was not an easy task. The use of ladders was completely out of the question. Instead, scaffolding had to be hired and erected. You will note that the hall roof slopes, so that as we moved down the hall, the height of the scaffolding needed to be reduced. All this was done under the able supervision of Alan Holmes, our site agent. All the lighting strips were replaced as they were all of the same vintage and would likely have failed at some point

QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTIONS

The Quinquennial Inspections (QI) for both the Church and the Extensions were done last year. These are both extensive documents and the building team has examined them and assessed what can be done within our very limited budget. The work identified by the architect is categorised as 1) Urgent, 2) essential - to be done within 12 months 3) to be done within 5 years, 4) to be done within the next 10 years, 5) items requiring specialist advice, 6) routine maintenance and 7) monitoring. (NB, we are taking care of these last two categories).

The urgent items have been completed, namely the replacement of the failed expansion tank in the church boiler room and the inspection of fire-fighting equipment. Following the latter, its recommendations were put into place which involved sourcing replacements for failed and out-of-date kit.

The team is gradually working its way through categories 2 and 3. Some of the jobs in these categories will require external contractors. Some may even not be done due to lack of funds. As you know, we have a champagne church and have only beer money to maintain it! However, thanks to the competence and long experience of Alan, some jobs can be tackled in-house. Work done in 2023 included: safety tape installed on step nosings throughout, repair of missing downpipe and channel, upkeep and protection of crumbling masonry and effigies and improving the state of the external timber frame of the high-level window above Chancel Arch - lots of linseed oil used!

For these works and others, we remain most grateful to the Friends of Luton Parish Church who have assisted us with the finance.

MISCELLANEOUS

As part of his regular hours, Alan has kept the place running, doing a variety of jobs, too numerous to mention, but including such things as repairing water heaters that went bang, new door hinges, repairing locks etc. A particular highlight this year included the reinstatement of the corridor parquet floor which needed digging up because a section of heating system pipe needed to be replaced completely as it was leaking. This was a right mess, but you would never know it had been done now!

FINANCIAL REPORT

by Anne Adams

The Finance Team meets six times a year, reports to PCC and has the delegated role of managing the finances of St Mary's. The Finance Team members include: Andrew Rodell, our treasurer; Andrew Beale who heads a small team who work on raising income from the use of our buildings; John Milligan who looks after all matters relating to insurance; Mike as vicar; and Sue and John as wardens. I (Anne Adams) chair the team and together we share what wisdom and experience we have to manage the financial aspects of St Mary's church life. I am so grateful to each team member, especially Andrew as our treasurer. The amount of work done by the team is often unseen and is significant. We are also very grateful to our auditors, Miller and Co.

All the detail is shown in our accounts for 2023 and Andrew as treasurer has written a report there. The main financial headlines for 2023 were:

We made an appeal for additional giving to fund the post of the Children's worker. This resulted in an amazing commitment from the church of £13,000 per year for three years. We now have Katie in this post. A big thank you to all who were able to join in by responding to this appeal.

Our general giving has not dropped by much during the year - this is amazing as we are all experiencing the squeeze of the increasing cost of living, thank you to all who give. The ministry of the church happens as a direct result of our giving. We have made two large investments in our building during 2023. Replacing our church chairs cost £26,760 and was paid for from the chair replacement fund and our general funds. The broken heating in the church hall was replaced at a

cost of £54,928 (this included the leaks which were subsequently discovered). This was paid for from a fund transferred to St Mary's when St Matthew's church was closed and had been set aside for major items such as this.

Both investments had become necessary to enable us to offer a warm flexible building to our congregations and to those who want to hire the building. We have already seen the benefits of both investments.

The increasing cost of living has hit our expenditure, as you would expect. A significant increase was the new gas contract for heating the church - this was an 86% increase meaning that during December our gas bill was £4000! Costs for our other utilities and all the general costs of running the church have increased.

The hiring of our building contributed an income of £30,000. During 2023 we hosted the Royal London Philharmonic Orchestra for a week of workshops culminating in an experimental concert. We also have several regular users and have increased the number of musical concerts in this amazing venue. We did not host any graduations for the University of Bedfordshire in 2023 but are pleased they are returning in 2024. We are working to explore how we can increase the income from hirings. A big thank you to all who work to make this all happen. The bottom line for St Mary's is that because of our two large investments, mentioned above, there is a total deficit of £78,000 at the end of 2023. PCC decided that the two major projects were of such importance that they have essentially been taken from our reserves. The actual deficit for the day to day running of the ministry of St Mary's was £8,500. Looking forward we have again had to ask PCC to accept a large deficit budget for 2024. In these changing times we cannot ignore the financial trends.

What is God saying to us? We believe God to provide for our ministry needs - He does that through our giving and through using our gifts, talents, creativity and what is in our hands to do and use. This is a challenge that belongs to us all, and we are all part of the answer.

WHO IS WHO AT ST MARY'S STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS IN 2023

by Ulrike Hunt & Mike Jones

If you volunteer and are not on the list, we would like to thank you. We ask you to tell us what you do so we can add you next year. We value all our team and love inviting you to our regular connection events.

CLERGY, WARDENS AND STAFF

Incumbent: Mike Jones

Clergy: Chris Adams, Dr Andy Pike, Joseph Adewale.

Churchwardens: Sue Carter and John Mascoll

Staff Team: Ulrike Hunt (Senior Administrator), Marsha Dorgan-Bratt (cleaner), Adam Whiting (youth and community minister), Anne Adams (staff support), Sue Carter and John Mascoll (church wardens). Anthony Moss has remained on the staff team on an ad-hoc basis as warden emeritus.

Alan Holmes is on site as an ad-hoc site manager, working closely with Anthony Moss. We are thankful for all the repairs they are doing around the site.

PCC & SYNODS

On the PCC following the 2023 APCM were

Retiring in 2024: Yasmin Milligan, Samson Ndebele, and Margaret Birtwhistle

Retiring in 2025: Andrew Rodell, Anne Adams, Alfred Vellah, Sulaman Raice Sunny.

Retiring in 2026: Angela Symonds, Gordon Shrosbree, Bethany Whiting and Steve Hudson

General Synod representative: Peter Adams

Deanery Synod: John Spurgeon, Cathy Nobles, Michael Carter

A-Z OF VOLUNTEERS

PCC SUB COMMITTEES:

Buildings Liaison Team: Anne Adams, Sue Carter, Mike Jones, Ulrike Hunt, Anthony Moss

Finance Committee: Anne Adams (Chair), Andrew Rodell (Treasurer), Andrew Beale, Mike Jones

HR Group: Anne Adams, Sue Carter, Ulrike Hunt

Hirings Committee: Andrew Beale, Ulrike Hunt, Jay Huffman (between May and November).

Standing Committee: Vicar, Wardens, Treasurer, Lay Vice Chair.

Way Ahead / COG: This team, made up of clergy, wardens, former wardens and a few others, prays about the future of church and discusses strategic issues. It is a subcommittee of PCC. Members include Anne Adams, Peter Adams, Joseph Adewale, Sue Carter, Penny Fisher, Ruth Jones, John Mascoll, Catherine Moss (off sick), Andy Pike, Gordon Shrosbree.

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

All Age Team: Andy Fisher, Jason Hunt, Ulrike Hunt, Adam Whiting, Mike Jones and Dr Andy Pike. Summer Church also included the help of Ruth Jones and Carly Pike.

Bring and Share lunches: Sue Carter, Anne Adams and Ulrike Hunt

Chalice: Brendan Owen, Barzil Gweshe, Jean Godden, John Milligan, Nick Bowman, Clive Barratt, Anthony Moss, Samson Ndebele

Flowers: the flower arrangements we see around church were put together by Jennifer Randall. Other decorations by Ruth Jones and others.

Home Communion: John Mascoll, Dr Andy Pike, Joseph Adewale.

Litter Picking: We are thankful for Yasmin Milligan and John Mascoll who regularly pick litter in our church yard.

Men's Ministry lead: Clive Barrett

Men's Walking Weekend: Andy Fisher, Jason Hunt, Steve Hudson and Paul Connelly

Missionary Liaison: Michael Carter and Angela Symonds

Organists: Andrew Rodell, John Spurgeon and Phoebe Yu regularly play at 9 am services. Roy Meek and Roger Carter play for weddings and funerals

Peace Centre: Mike Jones, Peter Adams, Cathy Nobles

Pianists: Malcolm Kirby and Andrew Rodell

Sacristans: Sacristans work behind the scenes to prepare communion each week. Our sacristans in 2023 Paul Parson, Yasmin Milligan and Rachel Gill joined Lorna Davitt and John Mascoll

S.A.S: the wonderful people who sort out our screens, audio and streaming each week in

2023 were: Adam Whiting, Alan Holmes, Angela Andrews, Dr Andy Pike, Chukwuma Jideopor, Graham Eaton, Jason Hunt, Joseph Adewale, Martin Watson, Mike Jones, Paul Connelly, with Mark Miller starting to come on board

Schools Ministry: Andy Fisher, Ruth Boctor, Yasmin Milligan, John Milligan, Ruth Boctor and Margaret Birtwhistle

Service Facilitators: enable the smooth running of a service by unlocking the building, ensuring security, supporting the welcomers, and locking the building up again. They also ensure legal aspects of the service, such as counting people at each service, is done.

Service Facilitators in 2023 were: Anne Adams, Anthony Moss, Clair Griffin, Rachel and Robbie Gill, Sue Carter, Sulaman Raice Sunny, Ulrike Hunt.

Refreshments: we started the year with refreshments in the hall after the service. However, very few people went. One Sunday we took a visitor to the hall for refreshments to meet others, and only two other people were there! So it was decided to have refreshments at the back of church between the services.

Clive Barratt and Jennifer Randall are the stalwarts who normally set this up. (We would love more people to join this team!) Yasmin and John,

Alyssa and Rodica and Paul Parson then help serve refreshments and clear it all away again at the end of the morning.

Service Leaders and Preachers: the clergy have enjoyed the support of Angela Symonds, Anne Adams, Cathy Nobles and Peter Adams, Michael Carter, John Mascoll, Ulrike Hunt and Joseph Adewale over 2023 in leading services and speaking. We also enjoyed various visiting speakers including the Clemisons, Matt Vaughan, Stephen Hoyland at the start of the Retreat in Daily Life, and Mark Edison at our Friends Service. A special thanks to Chris Adams who covers so many services.

Trust Administration: Joan Turner managed the Agnes Poulton Trust, while Rebecca Orrin continued to manage the St Mary's Charitable Trusts.

Various volunteers: Michael Carter led us in the seder meal on Maundy Thursday in 2023, with food provided by Sue Carter. We are also thankful to Shafayatul Islam, who so faithfully cleaned for us when cover was needed in 2023.

Welcomers: This team welcomes people on a Sunday morning. They create a warm welcome for 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.

Welcomers in 2023 were: Albert Timson, Angela Symonds, Cathy Nobles, Chantal O'Donnell (before she left Luton in summer 2023), Margaret Birtwhistle, Paul Parson, Rachel and Robbie Gill, and Steve Hudson

Welcoming Wednesday: the chaplains from the Luton Community Chaplaincy and volunteers from St Mary's who ran this weekly in 2023 were: Anne Adams, Cathy Nobles, John Spurgeon, Margaret Birtwhistle, Yasmin Milligan, Edna Omigie, Alison Elliott, Michael Carter.

Worship Band: The worship was led by Richard Cowling until he left Luton in August 2023.

Other worship leaders included Ruth Jones, Alex Du Rand and Jean Du Rand and Lucy Kileo. More recently, Ijay Omotade has been leading worship on a regular basis. Musicians and singers included Andrew Beale, Andrew Rodell, Katie Smith, Rodica Shirley, and Rosemary Rodell.

Young Church Team leaders and helpers: Young Church was led by Eleanor Savage, Ruth Boctor and Titilayo Adewale. Young Church helpers were: Carol Stevens, Champa Channaiah, Ebenezer Wusu, Lisa Tull, Lizzie Douglas, Harika Gade, Naomi Ng'ang'a, Ola Adebawale, Peggy Scott, Ranjita Shaw, Simon Shirley, Sisi Wang, Wandy Vellah .

Youth Leaders The youth team, headed up by Adam Whiting, was Fiona Duggan, Caspar Muller and Andy Fisher, with help from Tychique Chiamala, Melody Abubakar and Ulrike Hunt. Impact on a Thursday evening is run by Adam Whiting with Feast youth worker Kristina Druce, Ellis Wang, Jean Godden and Ulrike Hunt

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 six times during the year. The Church Oversight Group (COG) meets ten times a year, 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 or the Annual meeting of Parishioners. This happens immediately prior to the Annual Parochial Church 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.

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 elsewhere.

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 four subcommittees/teams: Finance, Buildings Liaison, Human Resources (HR) and Church Oversight Group. The significant Hirings Team reports to Finance. We will be looking to upgrade the role of this team as business development becomes more significant to the church for us to remain financially sustainable. Missions Group also recommends with the vicar allocations to mission.

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 priest 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).

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Bank: Barclays Bank plc

Independent Auditor: Miller & Co

Investment Advisers: Brewin Dolphin Bell Lawrie Ltd.

MIKE JONES (CHAIRMAN)

MARCH 2024 ON BEHALF OF ST MARY'S PCC