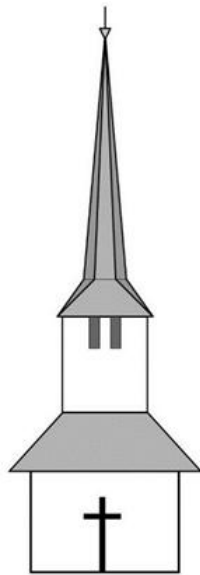


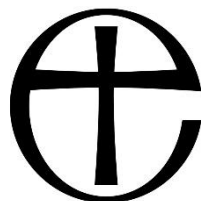
The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin Shenfield

**The Annual Report
Of the
Parochial Church Council**

January – December 2024



www.StMarysChurch-Shenfield.org.uk



**THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**

Aims and Purposes

The Parochial Church Council of the Parish of St Mary the Virgin, Shenfield (hereafter "the PCC") has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical Parish and among Church members living in surrounding areas, the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the physical Church of St Mary the Virgin, Shenfield (hereafter "St Mary's" or "the Church"). In January 2024 the Revd Canon Darren Barlow took up post as Rector following an interregnum of approaching 18 months.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to welcoming local people to worship at St Mary's and to become part of our Parish community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the Parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the various groups within the Parish profile. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and the Eucharist.

When planning our activities for the year, the Incumbent and the PCC consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance for charities on the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our Parish community through:

- worship and prayer.
- provision of pastoral care for people living in the Parish
- missionary and outreach work

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Mary's Church.

In 2024, the Parochial Church Council (Membership, Annex 1) met seven times.

The PCC currently has 12 elected members and 6 ex-officio members, who are automatically PCC members as a result of the office they hold; they include clergy (the Rector) and Lay ministers licenced to the parish, 2 Churchwardens and 4 Deanery Synod elected lay representatives. With the exception of the incumbent and any licenced Lay Ministers, these officers are elected or re-elected to their posts at the APCM; annually for Churchwardens, and every 3 years for the Deanery Synod Lay representatives. The PCC operates through a number of committees, as follows:

Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. Members: Rector, Churchwardens, Treasurer, PCC Secretary and a nominated member of the PCC.

Standing Committee Finance

This Committee oversees the general financial dimension of the work of St. Mary's by monitoring income and expenditure, budgeting and coordinating the annual review of the Christian Stewardship of money through planned giving. Full details of the finances, together with the annual accounts of St. Mary's Church, are set out in a separate document circulated with this report. The Members are the same as those of the Standing Committee.

PCC Appointments in 2024:

Vice Chair – Edna Grimble

Treasurer – Paul Bradbury

PCC Secretary - Richard Walton

Churchwardens' Appointments:

Fabric Officer John Bridger

Land & Tree Officer Linda Ward

In November 2024, Paul Jones was co-opted to the PCC, as Health and Safety Officer.

In September 2024, PCC approved a paper which reviewed the composition of the Standing Committee which is in line with the 'Model Rules of Parish Governance' in the Church Representation Rules and provided clear guidance of its delegated financial authority from the PCC.

A Working Group of the Standing Committee, Finance prepared in September 2024, a discussion paper and proposals, based on a review of expenditures and income, 'Towards Balance' and proposals, based on a review of expenditures and income, 'Getting St Mary's back to financial balance' and Communicating to the Church Community'.

Church Priorities were adopted by the PCC. The Priorities are aligned to global Anglican 5 Marks of Mission and were an important focus in a review of finances. (Annex 2)

Electoral Roll - Edna Grimble

On 31 December there were 505 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, 229 of whom are residents in the Parish and 276 outside the Parish. The Electoral Roll will be renewed in March 2025 and the new roll will be approved at the APCM.

Faculty applications - The Rector

During 2024 all of the faculty applications that were submitted were for the main churchyard, These were for either grave reservations or a headstone that would not have been permitted under the delegated authority of the Rector. All faculty applications were granted.

Smashing the Stigma

St. Mary's hosted an event as part of international suicide awareness week on Sunday, 8th September 2024, in the Butterfly Meadow. This event was a joint initiative by Bennett's Funeral Directors, the Revd Julie Hardy from Bentley Common and the parish of Shenfield. Various groups and organisations offering mental health support took part. Unfortunately, the weather was initially wet which deterred people from attending although the sun came out later. Overall, it was a successful event and is hoped to be repeated in September 2025.

Quinquennial Inspection, September 2024

The PCC has received the Quinquennial Inspection report, which was undertaken by Sherry Bates, our church architect. Thankfully, there are no major items of repair although there are a number of regular items of maintenance which we will be attending to shortly.

Financial Turnaround Report for 2024

Summary

In 2024 it became clear that the church finances were in a very difficult situation, with expenditure consistently exceeding income, and financial reserves being depleted. The PCC agreed to start a programme of revenue generation and cost reduction to achieve financial balance.

Good progress was made through 2024 but more remains to be done in 2025.

Context

When the PCC met in September, it was noted that the predicted deficit at year-end, if we were to meet all our planned expenditure, was £40-50,000 (not even counting one-off capital expenditure). This has been a consistent pattern across recent years. Sometimes in past years a generous one-off donation has meant we have reported a surplus, but the underlying position has been of a consistent deficit. Although we are blessed with significant assets, the PCC acknowledged it is its duty as trustees to be careful stewards of these resources and not run down our asset base.

The PCC therefore agreed to address the financial situation as a priority, and a subcommittee of the PCC Standing Committee was convened to make recommendations on the way ahead.

Actions taken and impact in 2024

Given the size of the deficit, it was clear that a concerted programme of actions needed to be taken both to increase our income, and to decrease our costs. These are summarised here.

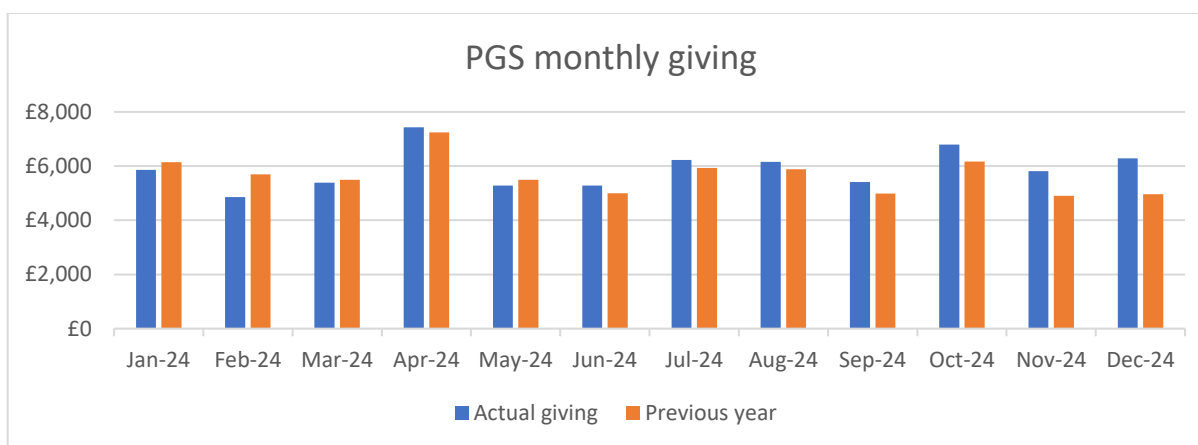
Increasing income

The main focus for increasing income was to encourage members of the church community to sign up to the **Parish Giving Scheme (PGS)**, which is a simple, predictable and tax efficient way to give directly to the church. Uptake of the scheme had dwindled in recent years, so a number of awareness-raising activities were undertaken cards in the pews, articles in the magazine, social media posts, and active promotion by the Rector during services.

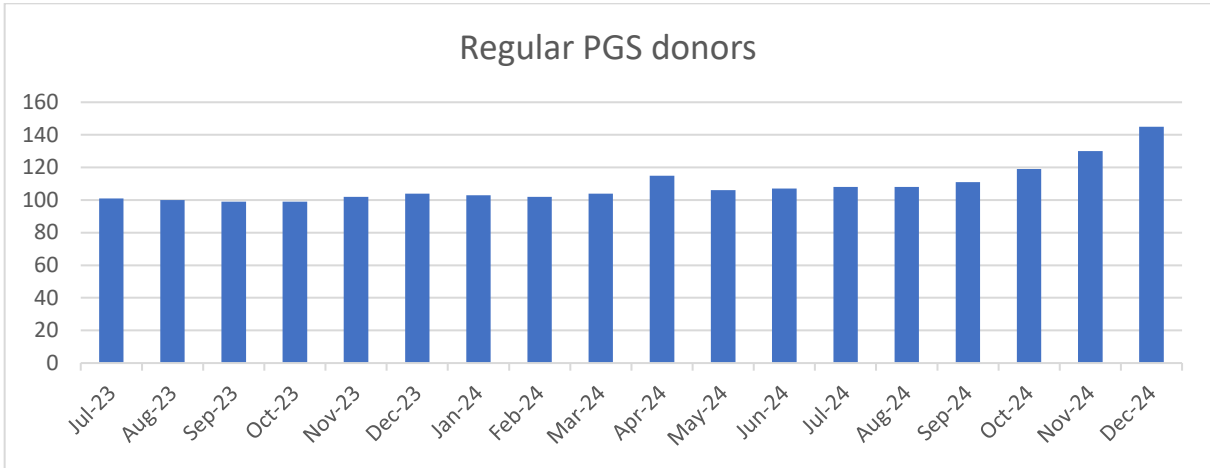
As a result of this, there has been very strong growth in PGS giving, reversing the previous decline and achieving an all-time high in terms of number of givers and amount given. This is summarised in the table and graphs below.

Overall, giving in 2024 was higher than 2023, but of particular importance is that we are now seeing over £1,300 more income per month (up 26%) as of the end of the year.

Regular giving	2024 giving	2023 giving	YOY change
In-month giving (December)	£6,281	£4,966	£1,314 (+26.5%)
Annual total	£70,784	£67,913	£2,871 (+4.2%)



The number of regular donors has grown rapidly in the latter part of the year, with 145 in December (up from 102 in January)

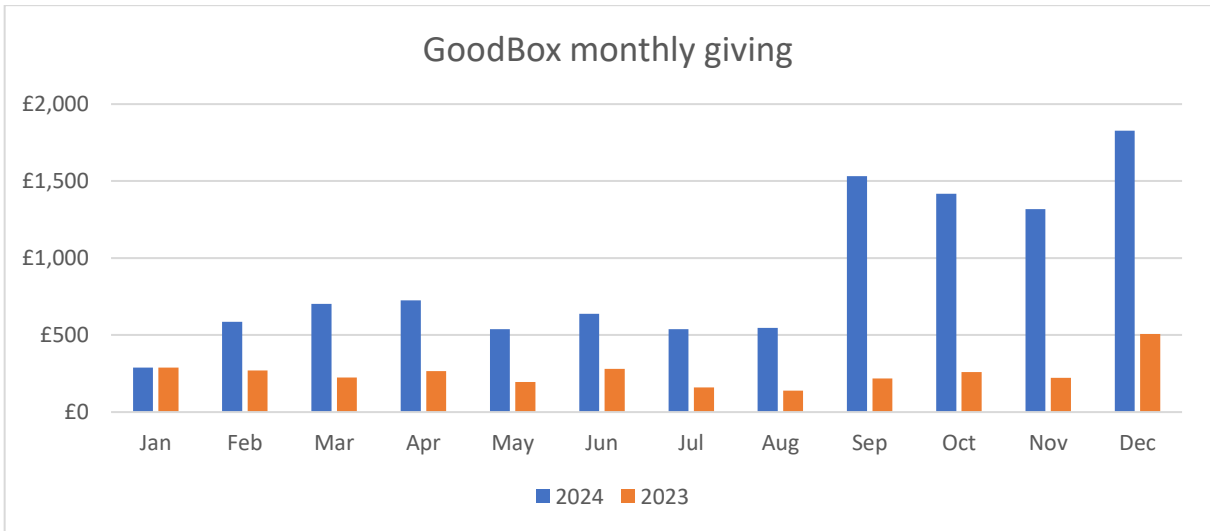


There are a small number of one-off donations through the PGS, but their value is a fraction of that from regular giving. In 2024, there were 17 donations, with a total of £1462.50.

In addition to the PGS, a renewed effort was made to increase offertory giving through better use of our **“GoodBox” contactless terminals**. From the summer, these were passed round during the offertory (rather than having them at the back of the church as people left), and the default giving amount was increased from £5 to £8. This led to a very strong increase in giving, as shown in the graph and table below.

Regular giving	2024 giving	2023 giving	YOY change
In-month giving (December)	£1,828*	£508	£1,320 (+260%)
Annual total	£10,661	£3,032	£7,629 (+252%)

* Including a deduction of £158 for money taken at the Christingle Service.



Again, by the end of the year, a monthly uplift of over £1,300 compared to previous years was being seen – although this may drop back as people are encouraged to switch their giving to the PGS.

In addition to the PGS and contactless giving focus, there have been **other activities to promote giving**, as follows:

- A new page on the church website, detailing the different ways that people can give (and including links for the PGS and direct bank transfer)
- Investigating the potential for grant income, and signing up for the Church Grants scheme
- Promoting legacy giving, through an article in the newsletter and information on the website

Decreasing expenditure – Parish Share

By far the largest expenditure for the church is our “Parish Share” – a payment to the diocese that covers the cost of employing our Rector, the support we receive from the diocese, and additional funds to support less affluent areas in Essex and beyond. The expected parish share for 2024 from St Mary’s was £125,953.

The PCC reluctantly agreed not to make this payment in full for 2024 and only pay £100,000. This has significantly reduced the deficit for 2024 (by £25,953) but is not a sustainable strategy for coming years. As one of the most affluent parishes in England, it is vital that we play our role in supporting the wider church – and any shortfall in our parish share payment impacts directly on important church work in some of the neediest areas of the diocese.

Beyond the parish share, expenditure includes the salaries of employees (the caretaker, administrator and organist) and the various expenses associated with running the church, such as gas, electricity and insurance. As an initial step in reducing these costs, the heating in the church has been changed to a reduced schedule (only on for days where there are services in the church). The extent of savings from this change is still to be determined.

Financial Priorities for 2025

The activities put in place in 2024 have already made a difference to the financial situation. At this stage, it is difficult to quantify these exactly, but the increase in giving alone could improve the position in 2025 by £25,000-£30,000. The PCC is enormously grateful to everyone who has contributed to this substantial improvement.

However, this alone will not be sufficient to close the gap and resume paying our full parish share. The PCC Standing Committee continues to meet and is considering what further action can be taken to increase income and reduce expenditure. Difficult choices may be needed in terms of what we prioritise, and we hope that the congregation will support us in these over the coming months.

Ministry Report

The Rector has strengthened links with both St Mary’s and Becket Keys schools by regularly leading worship and undertaking the role of school governor. The revised pattern of 9.30am Sunday morning worship has worked well. The first Sunday of the month is All Together worship which involves everyone staying together in church, the feedback has been very encouraging. On the third Sunday morning, we have sought to conduct baptisms within a family communion service. On the second of fourth Sunday morning’s we are using the Church of England’s Holy Communion ‘red’ books. Some of these books had become tatty and so we are very grateful for the donation that covered in full the cost of replenishing approx. 100 books. Attendances across the year were up. The advent and Christmas services were very well attended, and the Carol Service was considerably up from previous years. We continue to hold a n 8am communion service every Sunday morning and at 11am on a Thursday morning. Evensong continues to take place at 6.30pm on the first Sunday of the month. During 2024, we conducted 45 baptisms and 20 people were Confirmed (9 adults and 11 young people). We also conducted 2 weddings and many funerals.

Children's Ministry

Debbie Catton, Katie Bradbury & Gemma Naughton

Footprints - Rhyme Time for Babies and Toddlers

We continue to have families join us at our Friday fortnightly Footprints session. We have free play at the back of church followed by singing with instruments in the choir vestry. We have regular families in attendance, plus get some new faces too. We will be looking into some new toys and equipment in the coming months which will benefit Footprints and Footsteps. Unfortunately, we are struggling with volunteers, often being the same people - it would be lovely to have some of our retired church community supporting us. Please get in touch with Katie Bradbury on 07834 394670 if you would like to find out more about what this involves.

Footsteps - Creche

Footsteps continue to be popular on Sundays. The children enjoy colouring and a simple craft, learning about the Gospel reading being told in church. We are often close to capacity, showing we are 'back to normal' post Covid. It is often the first point of contact with new families into the church and feedback from parents who attend with their children is positive. The change to All-Together Worship on the first Sunday of each month has been well accepted and the less formal and more interactive nature of the service has made it easier for the parents and families with little ones to experience worship as a church community alongside the rest of the congregation. It has been good to see the church wardens come into the creche to take card payments for donations. It is suggested we leave details in creche about the Parish Giving Scheme.

Trekkers – Sunday School

Trekkers are for school age children and takes place every Sunday except the first Sunday of the month which is an All Together Worship.

It has grown in popularity having between 15-20 children a week. It is a real joy see so many children attend. The children have also given lovely feedback. They enjoy the crafts that the leader has prepped before the sessions which are aligned to the Gospel readings and enjoy receiving a religious themed reward after attending 5 sessions.

Some weeks it can be a challenge to get volunteers and in particular leaders. With 15-20 school age children we do need a leader and two helpers every week. Being in the Vestry has allowed more children to attend but we are at capacity and limited to reading stories, arts and crafts and cannot participate in games due to limited space.

After communion the children showcase their crafts along with an explanation as to what they have learnt.

St Mary's Charities - Charity Allocations 2024 – Debbie Catton

Charity (10 Charities)	2023 payment for comparison	2022 payment for comparison	2024 Total amount/cheque to be paid
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<u>Brentwood Citizens Advice Bureau</u> Offering free confidential information and advice to Borough residents	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>Brentwood Schools Christian Worker Trust</u> Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in local schools	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>Brentwood Street Pastors</u> Patrolling the streets at the weekends to listen to and care for young people, the homeless and the marginalized	£75.09	£21.12	No longer supported for 2024
<u>Chelmsford Diocesan Mothers' Union</u> to be designated to 'Away From It All' Holidays (AFIA)	No longer supported for 2023	£21.12	No longer supported for 2024
<u>Christians Against Poverty (CAP)</u> Providing free professional debt help through local churches across the UK since 1996.	£75.09	N/A	£170.02
<u>Little Havens Children's Hospice</u> Providing short term respite care for children and their families	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>St Francis Hospice</u> Caring for patients with cancer and life-limiting illnesses and their families	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>St Mary's School</u> For school funds to assist families	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>Shenfield High School</u> For their work in Religious Studies	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>SNAP (Special Needs And Parents)</u> Supporting local children with special needs & their families	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02

<u>The Mission to Seafarers</u> Caring for seafarers of all nationalities in 300 ports around the world	£75.09	£21.12	£170.02
<u>United Society Partners in the Gospel</u> USPG works in partnership with churches around the world to rethink mission, energise church and to champion justice.	£75.09	N/A	£170.04
Totals	£825.99	£253.49	£1700.22



Mission and Charities Allocations 2024

Each year St Mary's supports a number of charities nominated by the Mission and Unity Committee. These comprise of a variety of local, national and international charities. This charitable giving is an expression of our faith at St Mary's Church.

The charities account (Shenfield PCC Account no 2) has a much healthier balance for 2024 due to the increased activity within the church and contributions from two funeral collections. The established return of Craft Hub with its' increasing number of attendees has also made significant monthly contributions over the year. However, our main fundraising for charities has been achieved by the regular use of Easyfundraising, alongside an increase in the number of supporters over the year. We need to promote and encourage this effortless way of fundraising for our charities going forward in 2025.

Fortunately, the charities bank account charges. (£105.74) were also much lower this year and only 5.5% of our total funds raised as opposed to the 12% in 2023.

For 2024, after bank charges, a total of £1,700.02 was raised for the St Mary's nominated charities (2023: £825.99). Distributed equally between the 10 charities, a sum of £170.02 plus one payment of £170.04 (2023: £75.09) is to be allocated to each of the chosen charities for 2024. We now have on-line banking details and emails for each of these charities which makes all transactions much smoother and more efficient. Julie Anderon prepares and emails the letters.

Communications Committee report - Rachel Patel (Chair)

Parish Magazine Distribution (Jo Gurney)

- Subscription numbers remain roughly the same for 2025, at ~ 220 magazines per month. These are all print subscriptions. Three people pay to receive it by email (Laura Bazzoni emails it to them, as well as to Helen Prent for website purposes), but these are the only people it's emailed to — it's much better that we stopped emailing it.
- The cost of printing the magazines at the Diocese Print Unit is roughly £83 per month for 235 copies.

- The subscription fee remains the same at £10 per year. Most of the subscription money has now been paid in. I am currently chasing people who still need to give me the money for their round, as well as chasing individuals who need to pay.
- There have been a few changes to the distributors who deliver the magazine. I am always grateful to those people who volunteer to deliver.
- There has been some suggestion of the magazine going to 10 printed copies a year, with no magazine in August and in January. I think this is a positive idea. A lot of the people who deliver for me are away during August and it is always more difficult for people delivering them then. Also, the January edition creates a lot of work during December, and I usually lay them out in church on Christmas Eve. I think it would be better for the 'new year' magazine to come out for February, as this is when the subscription money begins to be collected.

Parish Magazine (*Nicola Hearn*)

- I'd like to echo Jo's point about the January and August editions — these are also the months when we struggle for content.
- The Parish Magazine continues to be produced monthly. Suggestions for improvement are welcome.
- This year, we have improved the timeliness of the Parish Magazine by changing the article submission deadline from the first Friday of the month to the second to keep the content as fresh as possible. This will continue.

Advertising (*Laura Bazzoni*)

- Laura has worked hard to increase advertising and formalise the advertising payment process.
- We have three companies, one being new for 2024/5, who have paid for annual advertising and this has generated £430.
- We are still on the lookout for more companies/organisations to advertise.

Social media (*Michelle Pocock, Pru Heidemans, Sophie Barlow and Sophie Garrod, with some input from Sarah Barlow too*)

- Our social media follower numbers are:
 - Instagram: 258
 - Facebook: 379
 We also have 272 likes on Facebook at the moment (March 2025). Engagement is definitely on the up.
- We plan to create a reel soon capturing some pictures of the inside of the church and what to expect from a service at St Mary's. We also share stories weekly, as well as post to try and grab people's attention for special occasions.
- Please let us know if we can do anything else or if anyone has any suggestions.

Church Website (*Helen Prent*)

- Following the transfer of the website to UK Churches in March 2024, there has been a flurry of activity, which Helen has been managing.
- All the children's and adults' Activities pages have been checked to ensure they have the correct content and activity leaders included.
- Updated photos have been added throughout the website to give it a more welcoming feel.
- To support the church's fundraising, new web pages have been added for 'Finances and Giving' and 'Legacies'. A Privacy and GDPR page have also been added.
- To ensure efficient communication between the website and the church's administrator (*Laura Bazzoni*), the info@ email address has been reinstated and the contact form on the website routes to this email address.
- The website brings the opportunity to improve links with our social media channels.
- Any feedback on the website is always very welcome, and if you have any suggestions for new web pages/photos to be included, then please get in touch.

TheLink (Paul Betts & Darren Barlow)

- Last year, we switched our main database and communication software from Church Desk to iKnowChurch. The data transfer went smoothly, and we continue to develop how we use the platform. The weekly newsletter, TheLink, is distributed using iKnow and, after some initial teething issues, now seems to be operating well.
- Currently, TheLink goes to ~ 700 email addresses, but we expect that number to drop significantly once we update our Data Consent information.
- In terms of feedback to my message inviting people to let us know if they no longer wish to receive email information from us, we've had two or three people responding each week asking us to remove them from our database. Other responses are usually, thank you, etc.
- Paper copies of TheLink are always available each week from the back of the church.
- Paul will produce and distribute TheLink again from the beginning of April.

Church Christmas Cards (Judith Gupta)

- The 2025 Christmas card was created by Sarah and Darren Barlow, with input from Rachel Patel, and was printed by Kevin Rowland, with him kindly covering the cost.
- 2,600 cards were printed — Darren was keen that all those living in the Parish of Shenfield should feel welcomed to St Mary's and was conscious that, for many, Christmas is the only time they come to church. Darren also explained that the Parish boundary extends beyond the railway bridge, and he and Sarah kindly offered to deliver to these homes.
- Mary Roder, Ros Garrod and I sorted the cards ready for delivery to the 16 group leaders. The group leaders then pass them to their distributors, who deliver them to the households on their lists. I contacted the group leaders in advance to ask them to check that their distributors were still able to deliver ~ 50 cards each and, thankfully, most people agreed to continue (we are very lucky that so many people are happy to help, as many no longer come to the church now their children have grown up and left home). Where there were gaps, I was able to recruit new people at church.
- About 200 cards were left over and these were kept in the church for visitors.

Additional Information (Rachel Patel)

- We have a WhatsApp group to discuss Communications. We still haven't met in person, instead using the WhatsApp group to move things along, but we're happy to reconvene soon if it would be useful and productive.
- I think we should write an article about the Communications Committee for the Parish Magazine and church website, so that people know who we are/what we do and hopefully contact us with timely information. Any other ideas/suggestions would be greatly welcomed.

Reports from Officers

Fabric Report - John Bridger, Fabric Officer

Routine works carried out.

- PAT testing
- Alarm testing
- Fire extinguishers tested.
- Lightning conductor tested.
- Gas boiler serviced.
- Gas heaters serviced.
- Roof valley and gutters cleared.

Major works:

- The outside lighting on the west and south side of the church and the porch has been replaced with LED lighting and more movement sensors were installed to better control the lighting.
- The gates to the School Graveyard were renewed and hard matting laid inside the entrance.

Minor works:

We thank Angie Donovan for keeping the church clean, and for the general care for the church and graveyards. We also thank the many volunteers who regularly carry out activities to keep the church fabric and graveyards in a welcoming and clean condition,

- the work of the small band of gardeners
- the brass cleaners
- the silver cleaners
- the pew dusters

Their devotion to duty is greatly appreciated by all church members and visitors.

Land Report - Linda Ward, Land Officer

The churchyard continued to be maintained last year with the help of our volunteers who work very hard to keep the area around the church looking neat and tidy. Seven roses were purchased three of which have been planted and four will be in the near future. A request was made for a new bench to be installed in the school churchyard and was approved without a faculty being needed as it was a replacement. Tree surgeons were called to take down some broken branches of the Cedar tree in the main churchyard which were overhanging the road. It was also necessary to call them again when a small tree in the school churchyard shed some branches. A magnolia tree in the new churchyard was removed as it had grown too large and there was a possibility that it would damage the surrounding graves. Japanese Knotweed Ltd made their annual inspection and found no evidence of growth of Japanese knotweed.

Health and Safety Report - Paul Jones

I joined the PCC as the Health & Safety Officer in Autumn 2024 and I have since continued the work of the team to monitor hazards, maintain procedures, and ensure that our Church (internally and externally) is a safe environment for all those who visit.

This year, I have carried out various tasks, including:

- Reviewing the existing health and safety records and fire safety protocols.
- Considered opportunities to enhance exit signage.
- Worked with Fabric Officer, John Bridger, to address minor repairs.
- Routine checks of equipment and hazards inside and outside the building.
- Provided input into risk assessments for events (including the Christingle service).

Further health and safety training for PCC members is expected to be organised during 2025.

Music - Suzanna Brooks

Suzanna Brooks is the Director of Music. Many thanks, as always, to John Hatt for standing in as organist on a regular basis and to Sylvia Bridger for supporting, conducting and regularly leading rehearsals as Head of Choir.

Choir practices are weekly on Thursday evenings. The choir supports all sung services, weddings and funerals on request, and church social events. We have an annual choir meal and produce monthly

articles for the parish magazine. The children's choir has restarted – the children rehearse before or after the 9.30am service once or twice a month and sing at the monthly All Together service.

The choir is affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). We hosted the first Deanery Choirs' Festival since 2019 in May and joined the choir at St Peter's in South Weald for their Patronal Festival Evensong in June. We continue to try to encourage student organists to practice at St Mary's on our wonderful organ.

During the first half of 2024 a successful organ repair fund campaign was run: we received £27k of donations, of which £20k was a grant from the Henry E Bass Fund for the maintenance of pipe organs. Thank you to everyone who contributed! The important organ repairs which we were able to carry out in the summer will extend the life of our organ further, enabling future generations to enjoy the music in the church for many years to come.

Safeguarding - Suzanna Brooks

Suzanna Brooks continues as the Parish Safeguarding Officer. Supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and using information available on the Diocesan website, St Mary's is following all Church of England safeguarding recommendations: these include DBS checks for all volunteers every 3 years, safer recruitment, and safeguarding policies and procedures set nationally. All volunteers in the church have a role to play in reporting any safeguarding concerns.

Job descriptions and risk assessments continue to be updated as required. It is important that we continue to follow safeguarding procedures for all our volunteers (children's helpers, bellringers, musicians and PCC members), and group leaders are thanked for their help with this.

Data protection Report for 2024 - James Anderson

Summary

In 2024 the PCC approved a formal Data Protection Policy, to ensure that we take good care of the personal data we are entrusted with and are compliant with all applicable legislation. It is important that anyone who handles personal data for the church is familiar with this policy.

Context

All organisations, including businesses, charities and churches, have important legal responsibilities to store people's data in a way that is secure, compliant, and respects individuals' privacy. In particular, the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has set clear guidelines on data protection in the UK. The PCC has therefore set out its obligations in a new Data Protection Policy, bringing it into line with other churches, and the expectations of our Diocese.

The policy

The policy is available for all to read, either by asking the Rector or Churchwardens, or by viewing the copy on the noticeboard at the back of the church. It covers the various requirements for how we store and use data, in particular ensuring it is:

- Processed fairly and lawfully in a transparent manner.
- Collected for specified explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes.
- Adequate, relevant and limited for that purpose.
- Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
- Kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purpose for which the personal data are processed; and
- Kept securely.

The Rector and Churchwardens are ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with the policy, with the support of our Data Protection Coordinator (a role kindly taken on by the Parish Administrator). However, any of the PCC or congregation who handle any data (including, for example, names, addresses, phone numbers or emails) should familiarise themselves with the policy and what it means for them. The policy was agreed and adopted by the PCC in November, and we are already making changes to working practices to ensure that we are compliant with the policy –

for example, through carefully collecting appropriate consent as part of our electoral roll update. We will soon only be contacting people where we have their explicit, written consent to do so.

Next steps

As we move into 2025, we will continue to do our best to ensure that we all adhere to this policy and respect the privacy and security of the data we collect.

Churches Together in Hutton and Shenfield - *Pauline_Sweetingham*

It has been an interesting year for Churches Together in Shenfield and Hutton as after our usual Christmas celebrations in the previous year, we were delighted to attend the installation service of the Reverend Canon Darren Barlow at St Mary's Shenfield on 21st January 2024. It was a moving service, and it was lovely to welcome and meet Shenfield's new Rector and to hear that he was a keen supporter of Churches Together. We looked forward to working with him.

This year we decided that we would be starting to consider exploring new events to extend our work in our community but still try to retain the things that we felt did work well.

Our next venture was the Walk of Witness on Good Friday, 29th March, starting at 9am at Hutton & Shenfield Union Church. We walked down to Mount Avenue carrying the big, heavy wooden cross and then sang our way up to Shenfield, where the Rev Cannon Darren Barlow gave a lovely meditation to complement our Easter hymns. Then we walked back to HSUC for coffee, tea and hot cross buns. Then on Easter Sunday we held Churches Together Easter Praise, 7pm at St Peter's, a service of contemporary worship and prayer followed by refreshments. It was well attended and very relaxed and enjoyable.

On Pentecost Sunday we held a celebration service of worship, prayer and unity at St Peter's, 6pm, 19th May. Again, Darren, and Rev Andy Smith supplied meditations for this, and it was a successful event.

In November, the Rev Cannon Darren Barlow and St. Mary's hosted the Churches Together service of Remembrance and CT AGM. All CT reps took part in this act of worship, which proved to be a very moving service. We were very grateful for Suzanna Brooks agreeing to play the organ for us on this occasion.

We ended 2024 with a very wet, and cold December Carol singing in Shenfield after which we needed to rush into Costa for a welcome, warming coffee.

We are very grateful for all the help and support Darren has given us during his first year at Shenfield and are hoping to try some new things for 2025.

Lastly, we are trying to find a second CT rep so that all member churches have 2 people representing each church. For this church it is VERY IMPORTANT, as I do get clashes of different meetings, which can result in me having to miss the CT meeting. Working with my CT colleagues is a true delight, for they are lovely people, and our meetings are fun and light-hearted. We have a 9pm cut-off time for the meetings, which are usually the second Monday in the month. Please consider whether you could be our second rep at our church; it is not an onerous responsibility. Most of our meetings are streamed.

Brentwood Deanery Synod - *Paul Betts*

The Deanery Synod brings together representatives of the 21 parishes within the Brentwood area. The quarterly meetings seek to provide information, and opportunities for discussion, of matters relevant to the activities of the church, both locally and nationally. Reports are received regularly from the Diocesan and General Synods. The representatives of St Mary's during this year have been Andrew Barton, Canon Paul Betts, Ian Eaton (from May 2024), Edna Grimble, and Pauline Sweetingham.

The Rt Revd Adam Atkinson, Bishop of Bradwell, spoke at the January meeting on the subject of Friendship, which he considers to be key to the life of the church. It is also a constant theme and force in the Bible. Jesus doesn't want to do things for us, but with us. At the April meeting Linda Percival, the EcoChurch representative for Chelmsford Deanery, made a presentation on Eco church. The meeting in July was cancelled.

The main address at the October meeting was given by The Venerable Jonathan Croucher (VJC), Archdeacon of Chelmsford. He explained that his recently extended Archdeaconry now included Epping) Deanery and consisted of 112 churches. He spoke of his journey from a law degree and legal career to ordination and serving as a Non-Stipendiary Minister before entering full-time parish ministry. He then described his approach to his role as Archdeacon.

Mission and Unity Committee – Paul Betts

The committee has met three times this year.

Efforts to raise money for the Charities have continued, especially by encouraging church members to make internet purchases through Easyfundraising, which contributes money to our church charities from every purchase made. The popularity of Easyfundraising is growing and is making an increasing contribution to our fundraising for the Charities.

Revd Darren Barlow, our new Rector, gave us an overview of his vision of Mission at St Mary's, emphasising the need to make everything we do the best it can possibly be.

There has been increased use of social media to promote the work of St Mary's, particularly to act as a noticeboard for coming events. A team of four people has now been set up to look after different aspects of this.

The Creche is very well attended, and the number of accompanying parents has been restricted to one. Trekkers now meet in the Clergy Vestry, which enables larger numbers of school age children to attend.

The special service for Education Sunday in February was very well attended and enjoyed great support from the school.

A Coffee Morning was held in the Choir Vestry on 17th May to raise funds for Christian Aid during Christian Aid Week.

An Easter card was sent to those on the weekly list of those who are unwell.

As members of Churches Together in Hutton and Shenfield, St Mary's needs a second representative to work on the Committee to promote joint activities with other local churches.

It was felt that accessibility could be improved by placing a second handrail on the left side of the steps up into the Choir Vestry, by providing a new portable ramp for wheelchair entry into the main door into the church and by publicising the outside ramp into the toilets.

A permanent display on the history and achievements of St Mary's should be developed.

The list of charities chosen for 2024 will be repeated for 2025 to give further time to discuss the church's approach to charity fundraising

Annex 1. PCC

Incumbent/Licensed clergy & lay ministers

Revd Canon Darren Barlow *Rector*

Ex Officio members

James Anderson	Churchwarden
Edna Grimble	Churchwarden
Paul Betts	Deanery Synod
Pauline Sweetingham	Deanery Synod
Ian Eaton	Deanery Synod
Andrew Barton	Deanery Synod

Elected members.

Paul Bradbury
John Bridger
Bill Hindley
Richard Walton
Rachel Patel
Suzanna Brooks
Linda Ward
Judith Gupta
Sarah Barlow
Mary Roder
Deborah Catton
Paul Jones

Annex 2. Church Priorities

Church Priorities currently being further developed by the PCC.

As a church, we look to the future giving due focus and priority to ...

Renewal - growing the church in numbers, discipleship and prayer.

Inclusivity - welcoming and valuing people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and church traditions

Accessibility - adapting the physical environment of the church building to make it accessible and appropriate for all.

Engagement - facing outward and being known and active in the community of Shenfield.

Care - looking after each other in a compassionate, supportive and safe environment.

Teamwork - sharing the tasks of ministry and mission across the many, not the few

Sustainability - being responsible stewards of the church's resources, and the environment in which we all live.

Joy - worshipping God in a church that is alive with music and praise.

