

# Annual Report 2023

## Parish of St Mary the Virgin



# Annual Church Meeting



# Azita's Ordination as Priest



**Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Denham  
Annual Meeting of Parishioners and  
Parochial Church Meeting  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2024, 10.30am  
St Mary's Church, Denham and Online**

**AGENDA**

1. Short service of worship

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

2. Vote of thanks to the Churchwardens for the previous year
3. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

4. Number of parishioners present and apologies for absence
5. Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 21st May 2023
6. Matters arising

Reports

7. Presentation of the copy of the church Electoral Roll
8. Annual Report for 2023
9. Financial Report
10. Churchwardens' Report
11. Deanery Synod Report

Elections

12. Election of Deanery Synod Member
13. Election of PCC Members
14. Appointment of Independent Examiner
15. A.O.B.
16. 2024 and beyond
17. Closing Hymn and Blessing

***APCM (provisional date):, Sunday 11 May 2025, 10.30am***

The Parish Church of St Mary's the Virgin, Denham  
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners & Parochial Church Meeting  
Sunday 21st May 2023, 10.30am  
St Mary's Church, Denham and Online on Zoom

### **1. Welcome**

Following a short service of worship, the meeting was chaired by the Rector, who welcomed everyone in the church building and on Zoom (hosted by Chris Macqueen). The Rector drew attention to the cover of the Annual Report, showing the infectious joy of everyone at the Jubilee.

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS**

### **2. Vote of Thanks to the Churchwardens**

The Rector gave thanks to both Churchwardens for their commitment to the life of the church – Sam's 5<sup>th</sup> year and Cathy's 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Both have made a big contribution to the life of the church. A gift was presented to both. The congregation expressed their thanks to both churchwardens.

### **3. Election of Churchwardens**

Sam Carter had agreed to stand again (proposed: Mike Stewart, seconded: Edda Lindner). Cathy MacQueen had also agreed to stand again (proposed: Kathy Paine, seconded: Clive Ashcroft).

The Rector gave thanks to their families for allowing them to commit to the role. This is Sam's final year as Churchwarden. The Rector asked the attendees to pray that God would prepare the right person to become Churchwarden once Sam stands down.

Sam and Cathy were jointly elected with the full support of the congregation.

## **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

### **4. Number of Parishioners Present and Apologies for Absence**

There were 67 present in the church building, and 6 on Zoom, a total of 73 attendees.

Apologies were received from John Breese, Robin Doran, Kathy Paine, Charlie McClelland, Janet Allen, Gillian Winder, Glynis Howell, Hilary Richins and Sandy Wickenden.

### **5. Minutes of the Meeting held on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

The minutes were accepted on a show of hands (proposed: Michele Lee, seconded: Pam Montgomery). All approved.

Amendment to minutes - Annual report 2020 should read 2021

### **6. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **REPORTS**

### **7. Presentation of a Copy of the Church Electoral Roll**

The Rector encouraged all to read the Electoral Roll report. Maurice Litchmore is the Electoral Roll officer and thanks were given to him for his diligent work.

There are 6 new members on the Electoral Roll. The Rector welcomed the newcomers. The Rector asked people who are not on the Electoral Roll to join and speak to the church office for more information.

Many of those who have come off the Electoral Roll have passed away. We thank God for their life and contribution to the ministry of this church. A special mention was given to Joyce Tearall, who was a Lay Reader and committed member of the church community for many years.

## **8. Annual Report for 2022**

The Rector thanked everyone who had prepared a report. He thanked all who volunteered and worked in the church. Particular thanks were expressed to:

- Gwen and Leslie who were the cleaners at St Mary's and St Mark's.
- Kim Van Campfort who was part of the Destiny youth group.
- Tim Macqueen who is a moderator and nature expert at Forest Church.
- Anne Thomas who chaired the St Marks Committee.
- Michele Lee who has taken on the role of the new chair of St Mark's Committee.
- Dom Birkby for the brilliant work in gathering together information and creating the volunteering catalogue and heading up the *Growing Hearts of Service* project.
- Louise Hardy, who stepped down as church organist and choirmistress. She shaped the music and life of the church for many years and continues to lead the Friday Bible Book Club which Ian Jennings started.
- Sandy Wickenden, who has been leading The Haven bereavement group since Ian Jennings retired.
- The Hearnden-Smith family for taking charge of the hospitality at Café Church.
- The Ministry team of 2022: it was a joy to work together. Azita Jabbari has settled in very well as Training Curate and is engaged in a wide variety of ministries.
- The Rector thanked his wife Edda, who is so important to the life of our church and a wonderful support to Christoph.

## **9. Financial Report**

Mike Stewart (Treasurer) provided a summary of the accounts which were included in the Annual Report booklet. He noted that we are in a strong financial position. The main sources of income for this year come from the Parish Giving Scheme which is approx. £5,000 per month plus Gift Aid and funds core activities of church. We have also received exceptional donations of £93,163 into the Fabric Fund for which we were able to claim Gift Aid of £22,500. £22,828 were given in legacies over the course of the year.

The Treasurer drew attention to the Rector's and Churchwardens' Fund. This fund was started in 1950's and has been used for charitable purposes, overseen by the Rector. This year it has been formally included into the PCC accounts and reviewed. It stands at £56,000.

The General Fund stands at £144,00 for the year and the cash balances are at £445,000.

All the main funds increased in value in the year.

For the current year 2023, the Treasurer forecast a deficit of £20K. The Fabric Fund is in good health and we are expecting significant expenditure on structural issues which need to be attended to. The Treasurer gave thanks to everyone for the generous giving which is continually received each month.

The Rector thanked Mike for his report, for his loyalty and diligence. He pointed out that Mike also oversees the Give and Share Fund. We doubled our gifts to our 5 Mission

Partners as our own finances were so healthy. The congregation expressed their thanks. The Rector also gave thanks to everyone who is giving to the Parish Giving Scheme. Due to the high inflation rate there will be a substantial increase for those who agreed to increase their gift in line with inflation. However, he made all aware that we give as we can and not as we can't. Long-term faithful givers passed away this year and therefore we rely on new people to join in with regular giving. Information about the Parish Giving Scheme and how to be a regular giver is available at [www.denhamparishchurch/give](http://www.denhamparishchurch/give) or from the church office.

The Accounts and Financial Report were accepted by the APCM (proposed: Clive Ashcroft, seconded: Michael Carmody).

The Budget for 2023 was received unanimously (proposed by Jane Brown and seconded by Brian O'Regan).

### **10. Churchwardens' Report**

The Rector commended this summary of the year.

### **11. Deanery Synod Report**

The Rector thanked Michael Carmody, Janet Allen and Brian O'Regan for representing our parish, helping to connect us with the wider church.

## **ELECTIONS**

### **12. Election of Deanery Synod Members**

Michael Carmody and Brian O'Regan have agreed to stand again. Janet Allen will not stand again. Therefore there is one vacancy.

Michael Carmody was elected for Deanery Synod: (Cathy Macqueen proposed, Brian O'Regan seconded).

Brian O'Regan was elected for Deanery Synod: (Jane Brown proposed, Mike Stewart seconded).

### **13. Election of PCC Members**

We have a total of 12 places for elected members on PCC, This year we have 6 vacancies.

Anne Thomas, Tim Sole and Charlie McClelland are not standing again for election. Sharon Williams had to stand down from the PCC after becoming chair of Denham Parish Council. Thanks to all of those stepping down from the PCC and for dedicating their time and giving their whole heart to the role. Gifts were given to them in recognition of their time serving on PCC. The Rector gave thanks to all members of the PCC for their commitment.

The following were duly elected onto the PCC: Kathy Paine, Sandy Wickenden, Kath Sole, Janet Allen, Charlotte Hearnden-Smith.

Profiles of those who have never served on the PCC before, namely Kath Sole and Charlotte Hearnden Smith were printed in the service sheet.

This year there were fewer candidates than available positions. Therefore each candidate was declared elected. Thanks were given to Kath Sole and Charlotte Hearnden-Smith for stepping into the role for the first time.

### **14. Appointment of Independent Examiner**

David Steel, Treasurer at St James Gerrards Cross and Fulmer, does an excellent job auditing our accounts. He was appointed as Independent Examiner for the coming year, on a show of hands (proposed: Dexter Brown, seconded: Michael Carmody).

## **15. A.O.B.**

There was no other business, but the Rector offered the opportunity to put any questions to him at the end of the meeting.

From Ann Collins: Natalie Sargent carries the Cross into church and it would be nice for someone to relieve her of this duty. The crucifer does not need to be in the choir. It was suggested that it could be the server.

From John Wertheim. The General Synod voted earlier this year to develop liturgies for the blessing of same sex marriages, to be presented to Synod. The Anglican Church worldwide is split on this matter. What is our view on this matter? In response, the Rector explained that the Ministry Team had been studying the "Living in Love and Faith" course to openly discuss the theme. The PCC and Ministry Team will have a Saturday meeting to explore the matter in detail. He invited all who wanted to discuss this matter to speak one to one with him. The Rector invited the congregation to walk together on this, and to stay united in our differences. Whether same-sex blessings ("Prayers of Love and Faith") will be used in a local church is the decision of the incumbent.

Thanks were given to our new organist Stephen Armstrong.

## **16. 2023 and Beyond: Towards New Mission Action Plan**

Christoph reflected on the strategic retreat which the Cockpit and Ministry Team attended. 'It is not that the church of God has a mission, but that the God of mission has a church'.

A handout was given and also a display at the back of church, listing the 5 areas for the future of God's church, which we need to discern together.

The five areas are as follows:

**New Momentum in Prayer Life.** Kath Sole spoke about the Prayer Room which she has set up in the Vestry for the week leading up to Pentecost Sunday. She encouraged people to sign up and not to be daunted. She is also looking at ways people can pray at home if they cannot come to the Prayer Room. The Rector gave thanks to Kath Sole and her team.

**New opportunities to create Community.** We have St Mary's Festival in September, the Rector encouraged the congregation to get in touch with the office if you are able to help. Vestry teas will not be going ahead, unless we find a co-ordinator to run them.

**New creativity in our Family Ministry.** Edda Lindner spoke about the upcoming Parenting Course. The theme is Anger Management and Handling Anger in the Family. This will be running in the Autumn Term. We have warm links with the schools in the area and hope that families who will benefit from this will sign up to the course.

**New Focus on Discipleship and Leadership Training.** We are planning to have a Confirmation Service. The Rector asked those who are thinking about Confirmation to get in touch with the church office.

**New investment in our buildings.** How can they be equipped best for Mission and Ministry? This needs investment. We are looking for people who can help us to apply for grants.

## **17. Closing Hymn and Blessing**

The meeting closed with Nnamdi Maduka leading the APCM in the "Leading Your Church into Growth" prayer and a blessing.

**Next APCM: Sunday 28 April 2024, 10.30am**

**Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Denham  
Annual Report and Financial Statements  
of the Parochial Church Council  
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Incumbent:**

Rev'd Christoph Lindner, The Rectory, Ashmead Lane, Denham, UB9 5BB

**Bank:**

Barclays Bank, 142 High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1JX

**Independent Examiner:**

David Steel, Danescroft, 37 Kingsway, Chalfont St. Peter, SL9 8NX

***Background***

The PCC of St Mary's Church Denham has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, Christoph Lindner, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church through regular public worship, pastoral work, teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses, events, small groups and religious assemblies in schools; children's and youth work; working for the common good of the parish in co-operation with other agencies; supporting other charitable work in the UK and overseas; ecumenical co-operation with other churches.

***Membership***

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure and in 2011 was registered with the Charity Commission as THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, DENHAM with Charity Registration Number 1144358.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the annual parochial church meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

**Up to the APCM 2023:**

Incumbent: Christoph Lindner, the chairman

The Churchwardens: Samantha Carter (vice-chair), Cathy Macqueen.

Elected members of the PCC were Kathleen Andersen, Dominic Birkby, Dexter Brown, Michele Lee, Christopher Macqueen, Charles McClelland, Kathy Paine, Timothy Sole, Mike Stewart, Anne Thomas, Sandy Wickenden, Sharon Williams.

The representatives on the Deanery Synod were Janet Allen, Michael Carmody and Brian O'Regan. The treasurer was Mike Stewart. The secretary was Victoria Lucas.



### **From the APCM 2023:**

Incumbent: Christoph Lindner, the chairman

The Churchwardens: Samantha Carter (vice-chair), Cathy Macqueen.

Elected members of the PCC were Janet Allen, Kathleen Andersen, Dominic Birkby, Dexter Brown, Michele Lee, Christopher Macqueen, Kathy Paine, Charlotte Hearnden-Smith, Kathryn Sole, Mike Stewart, Sandy Wickenden.

The representatives on the Deanery Synod were Michael Carmody and Brian O'Regan. The treasurer was Mike Stewart. The Secretary was Victoria Lucas.

### **Committees**

The *Cockpit Crew* is the *Standing Committee* of our PCC. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. Apart from its statutory members (Rector and Churchwardens) the members were Kathy Paine, Mike Stewart and Dominic Birkby.

Our *Fabric Team* looks after the fabric of St Mary's Church and the churchyard. It is chaired by Robert Ash.

*St Mark's Committee* is a sub-committee of the PCC within the ministry of Denham Parish Church, responsible for the maintenance and running of St Mark's Church Hall. It is chaired by Michele Lee. The Rector and Churchwardens are ex-officio members.

*Give and Share* is a ministry of Denham Parish Church which reports to the PCC. It is led by Craig Alexander and Caroline Goodwin, together with a leadership team. The Rector is an ex-officio member.

### **Church Attendance**

Please refer to the Electoral Roll Report below for details on the Electoral Roll.

In 2022 we started to count the number of screens/devices joining us online during the service (rather than the total number of views on YouTube). In several cases a screen will represent more than one person. In the past the average October attendance was calculated by excluding the highest and lowest Sunday to avoid distortions (e.g. baptism services with large number of guests).

On that basis, the average attendance at St Mary's in October 2023 was **69 adults in the building and 20 screens** (totalling 89) **and 14 children\***. This shows a slight increase of adults in the building compared with 2022 (66 adults), a significant increase of children (9 children in 2022) and a reduction in the number of people joining us online (24 screens in 2022). The total number of adults (in the building and online) has remained stable.

*\*(We had a very large baptism in October. Taking the average of all Sunday in October therefore results in 80 adults in the building.)*

In 2022 around 500 adults (2021: 300) and 114 children (2021: 50) came to our Carol and Christmas services at St Mary's in December. We were joined live on YouTube by a total of 140 screens during those services.

In 2023 around 550 adults (2022: 500) and 125 children (2022: 114) came to our Carol and Christmas services at St Mary's. These numbers show a continuing trend of recovery after Covid, but are still significantly down compared with 2019 (900 adults, 148 children), especially for adults.

In addition to the services at St Mary's, we held "Carols at Café Church" at St Mark's, as well as "Carols and Readings for Christmas" at Denham Garden Village.

### **Occasional Offices**

In 2023 we had 20 baptisms, 2 weddings, as well as one renewal of marriage vows, 15 funerals and 21 burials of ashes.

### **Safeguarding**

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. Please refer to the separate report by Samantha Carter for details.

### **Electoral Roll Report**

St Mary's Denham Church Electoral Roll has been reviewed and amended as required by the Diocesan Synod and is available for viewing at this meeting. The Roll will also be displayed on St Mary's, St Francis and St Mark's Notice Boards.

The review for this year has seen the removal of five names and the addition of eight new entries; this has resulted in an increase of three on the 2023 Roll. The number of names entered upon the Church Electoral Roll for the parish is one hundred and fifty-nine (159).

Parishioners who are listed on the Roll are entitled to vote at this meeting. However, to qualify for nomination to the PCC they must have been registered on the Electoral Roll for at least six months.

Addresses have been checked and verified by the Churchwardens and are held on the Electoral Roll Database. In accordance with the Data Protection guidelines, addresses of members are not published on copies of the Roll that are on display in the churches of the parish.

New applications may be submitted after the closure of this meeting for inclusion on the next Roll. Application Forms are available from the Electoral Roll Officer or from St Mary's church office.

Copies of the Church Electoral Roll Certificate will be displayed for a minimum of fourteen days alongside the Roll already on display in the parish churches after this meeting. A further copy will be sent to the Secretary of the Deanery.

*Maurice W Litchmore, Electoral Roll Officer, 28 April 2024*

# REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2023

## Aims, Objectives & Activities

Our aims and objectives are summarised by our Vision Statement:

**We pray like Jesus.** Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God as 'Father' and was in constant communication with Him. As his followers we want all our life to be grounded in our relationship with Him.

**We welcome like Jesus.** We have experienced God's welcome in Jesus and want to be a welcoming community for everyone.

**We share like Jesus.** We are called to share life, faith and ministry and to develop a culture of generosity that speaks of our generous God.

**We dare like Jesus.** The church must be courageous at a time when it would be so easy to retreat. This needs to be a courage that is discerned in listening to God together and sustained by his Spirit.

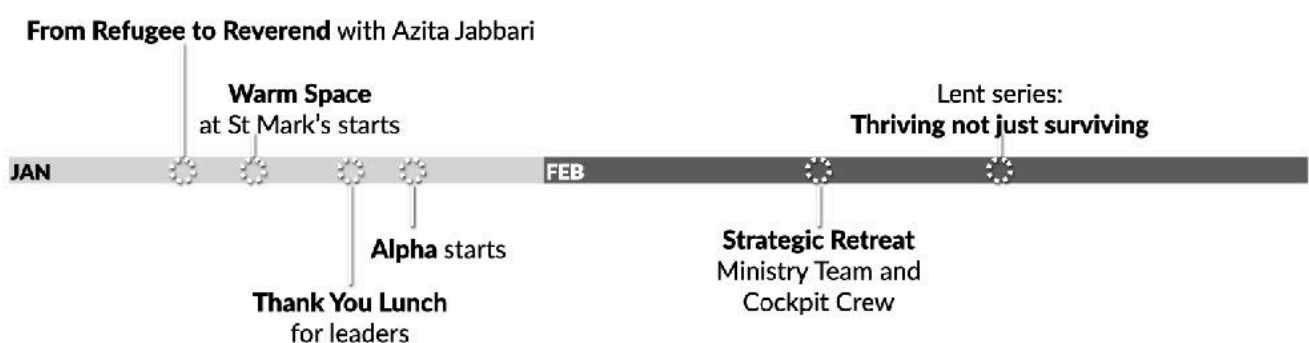
The PCC met nine times in 2023 - five times at St Francis, three times on Zoom and once at St Mary's Vestry. In addition, there was a PCC Away Day in June, which was held in Chalfont St Peter (Goldhill and Parish Church).

Our Standing Committee (Cockpit Crew) met six times.

## RECTOR'S REFLECTION

The cover pages show some of the highlights of 2023. We celebrated 900 years of St Mary's Church Denham. During those years there have been many blessings and many battles. But there are two constants: Without God's faithfulness and blessing throughout the generations, there would be no *Denham Parish Church*. Neither would this church exist without the loving service of each member. Thank you! Our calling is to carry the flame of the Gospel in our lifetime, as runners in a relay race, and pass it on to the next generations.

The "Leading Your Church into Growth" prayer is asking God to give us three kinds of growth: (1) in numbers, (2) in spiritual commitment, and (3) in service. In this short reflection I want to trace these three themes in the life of our church in 2023.



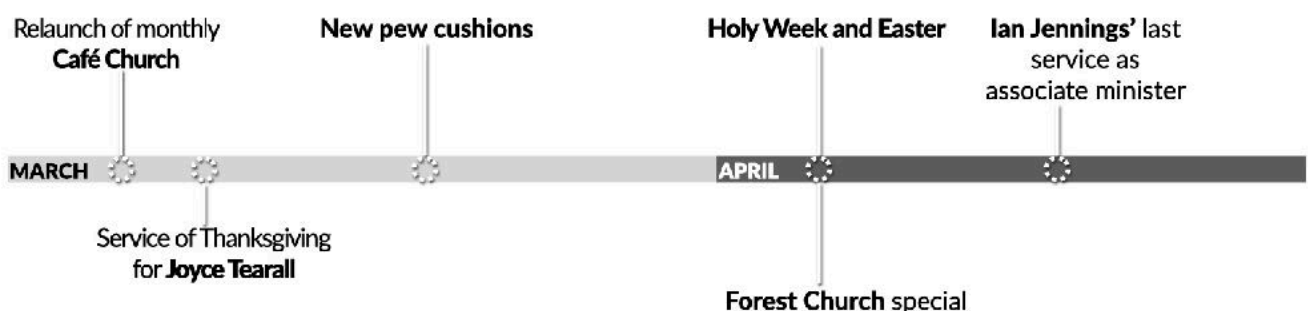
## GROWTH IN NUMBERS

One number stood out in our celebrations in 2023: 900 years. That is nearly half the time between the beginnings of the church of Jesus and the present! What a beautiful (and sometimes daunting) privilege to steward the Ministry and Mission of Denham Parish Church today. Our attendance figures for 2023 year ( see page 9-10) show a further slight recovery since Covid. We have welcomed new people throughout the year and welcome new members of our Electoral Roll today. We have also said good-bye to church members who have run their earthly race. It is an encouragement that the total number of Electoral Roll members has grown slightly. The upwards trend in the number of baptisms continued in 2023 (a total of 20). Of course numbers don't tell the full story and it can be dangerous to focus on them too much. The commission that Jesus gave to his church is to make *disciples*.

## GROWTH IN SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT

We grow as disciples in our personal spiritual rhythms, in our times of joint worship and teaching at Sunday services and - significantly - in small groups. At Denham Parish Church we are blessed with a wide variety of groups - Life groups, Bible Book Clubs, Alpha, groups for children and youth, The Haven, as well as groups that have a common purpose, such as the Choir, Bellringers or the Fabric Team. The Alpha Course in the spring term was held at St Mark's. In the summer term, Azita Jabbari started a new Lifegroup on Mondays, which offered Alpha participants an opportunity to continue to meet and grow in their faith. One highlight in 2023 was the Confirmation Service at the beginning of October - many of the candidates had previously taken part in Alpha.

The Bible compares the Church to a building made up of living stones, where all are needed and contribute with their God-given gifts. As a result of our "Growing Hearts of Service" initiative we were able to re-start the monthly Café Church services at St Mark's at the beginning of 2023. Over the course of the year members of this church stepped into new roles and joined new teams. "Growing Hearts of Service" will remain an important theme for us. As Edda and I prepare for our three-month Sabbatical in 2024 we pray that it will be another catalyst for all-member ministry.



A big thank you to all who lead a group, who pastor others in a group or one-to-one! This is not a role that should be restricted to the ordained members of the church, but it needs everyone to come alongside others. Our 'Thank You' lunch for leaders in January was a small token of our gratitude.

Last year we gave thanks for Joyce Tearall, who pastored so many people during the many years of ministry in Denham. We also said a big thank you to Ian Jennings who returned to Sheffield "full-time" after having been part of our church's life for four years. In January Azita Jabbari shared with us her life story and how Jesus called her to commit her life to him. We were able to celebrate another chapter in her discipleship journey with her ordination as priest in June.

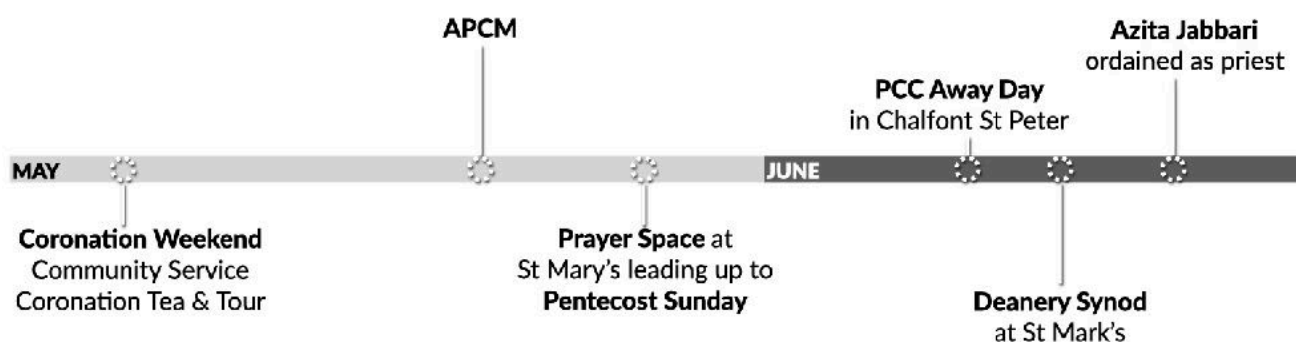
2023 has been a financially challenging year, ending in a substantial deficit. This must not detract, though, from the faithful regular giving of so many members of this church -you can see a graphic representation on the inside back cover. Our financial giving is part and parcel of our growth as disciples as we resource the life of Denham Parish Church and experience God's faithfulness in material things. We are grateful to each of you. If you are new to our community, I am encouraging you to think about starting to give in a regular way - no matter how much you are able to give.

Our spiritual growth is underpinned by our prayer life and in the week before Pentecost Kath Sole and her team transformed the Vestry into a prayer room. Everyone who spent time in it, told us what a positive experience it was.

## GROWTH IN SERVICE

2023 was book-ended by two distinctive ways of serving our local community. In the winter months we offered a Warm Space at St Mark's and towards the end of the year we installed a Defibrillator at St Mark's after our research showed that there was a need for an AED that is publicly accessible in Denham Green. This was followed by a series of free training sessions, which were well-attended by local residents.

We continued to improve our buildings to make sure they serve the community well - the ongoing diligent work of the Fabric Team ensures that St Mary's will be the focus of our community's life for future generations and new pew cushions provide a much more comfortable welcome. In the autumn the PCC agreed a plan



to upgrade our AV system at St Mary's. A retractable video screen, upgraded audio and much improved video streaming system will make sure it remains a flexible and attractive venue. We are seeking Diocesan approval for these plans in 2024. It's also important to mention the many people who make our buildings places of welcome by cleaning and decorating them and by providing a personal welcome to visitors.

We also served our community through joint events and celebrations - the Coronation Weekend with free "Royal Teas", the 900-year celebrations at St Mary's Festival, as well as creating spaces for grieving people at The Haven and the "Remembering Loved Ones" service. Our *Give and Share* team continue to provide vital help for those who struggle to make ends meet - especially at Christmas but also throughout the year.

It is lovely when community service is reciprocated - for half a day a team from Denham Green Academy came to help with the maintenance of St Mary's and its churchyard - thank you!

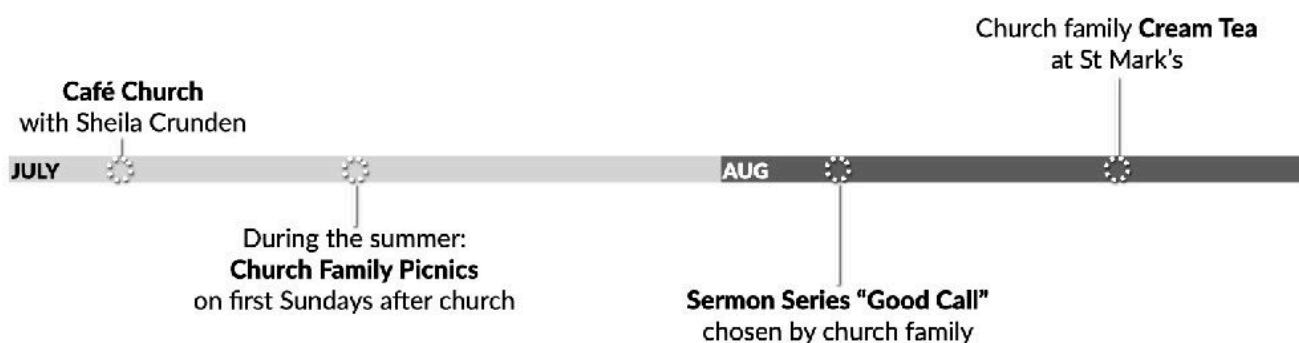
One casualty of the Covid years was the May Fayre. After putting out a call to those who want to help bring it back, a new Fayre Committee was formed in the second half of the year, working hard to plan a family-friendly community celebration in 2024.

At a strategic retreat in February and a PCC Away Day in June we identified the work with young people, families and schools as a clear priority for the years ahead. Serving them will be at the heart of our plans for the coming years.

## BEING PART OF THE WIDER CHURCH

As a local church we value our relationships with other churches and Christian organisations. There were various opportunities in 2023 to engage with our Mission Partners (e.g. John Shaw from Tearfund in January about the Climate Challenge and Sheila Crunden in July about her work with Wycliffe Bible Translators). Towards the end of the year our PCC reviewed our list of Mission Partners and decided to adopt *Care for the Family* as a new mission partner, very much in line with our focus on serving families. *Church Army* will not be one of the five charities anymore, but we continue to support their work in a more general way.

In June we welcomed the Deanery Synod at St Mark's.



## PRAYERS OF GRATITUDE AND INTERCESSION

Please read the individual reports to get the full picture. May our reflection on the past year be fuel for our prayers of gratitude as well as intercession.

On behalf of the PCC



Rev'd Christoph Lindner, Rector

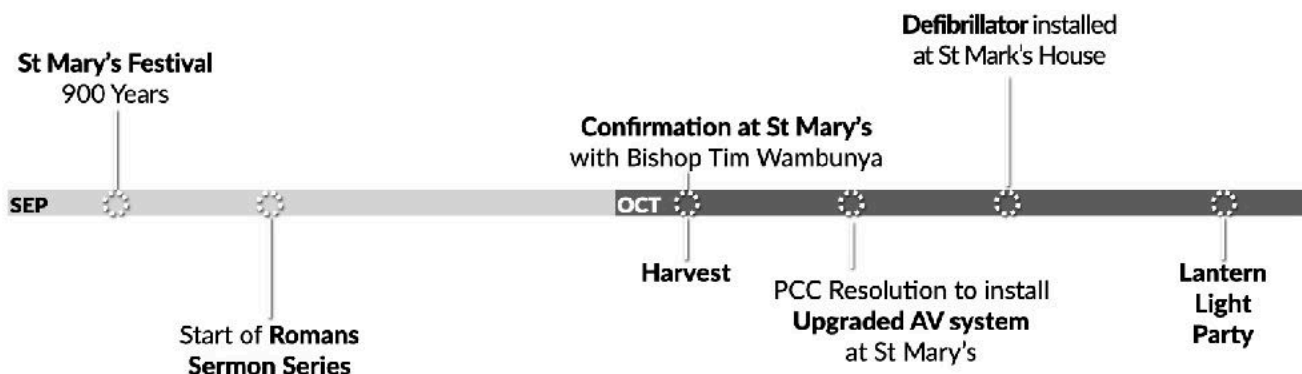
## CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2023

2023 was an extra special year as we celebrated 900 years of faith and community in St Mary's Church. It was so encouraging to see how vibrant the life at Denham Parish Church was and we would like to thank you for your support and being part of this family.

The year got off to a busy start with the Warm Space open in St Mark's and the churchwardens called in when they could to help Azita, Michele and their team. We enjoyed attending "Refugee to Vicar" which Azita hosted in St Mary's and helping serve her tasty treats. We were pleased to join the Ministry Team for an offsite strategic retreat weekend in Little Kimble where we took stock, reviewed the last year and planned for the way ahead.

In March we completed the Articles of Enquiry, the annual questionnaire sent to us by the Diocese and asked the PCC to review and renew the Safeguarding Policy. We were so excited when the new pew cushions Cathy had ordered for the church arrived. She enjoyed finding homes for the old ones too! Sam had fun preparing the Mothering Sunday posies and seeing the joy on the faces of the many recipients.

Holy Week brought a busy week of services and on Holy Saturday a small team of people worked diligently to clean and tidy the church whilst Pam and her team did wonders with the flower arrangements. We were blessed with splendid



weather for Easter Day and it was great to see so many children and families outside for the refreshments and egg hunt before everyone congregated in church to worship and add flowers to the cross. A week later it was sadly time to say goodbye to Ian after four years of ministry in our Parish. We celebrated all that he had meant to us with an afternoon tea party in the local village school and at church on his final Sunday.



*(Easter decorations)*

In May we commemorated the Coronation of King Charles III with a wonderful celebration Sunday Service and a Bank Holiday Monday Coronation Tea & Tour. The church was decorated with beautiful bunting, floral arrangements and decorated bicycle wheels by all the local schools and organisations. Many loyal volunteers helped Sam by baking and serving teas in the vestry and Christoph gave talks in the church about the 900 year history of the building. Cathy & Sam were honoured to be re-elected at The Annual Parishioner's meeting.

During a very hot June we had our PCC Away Day in Chalfont St Peter and hosted the Deanery Synod meeting in St Mark's. We were proud to support Azita at her ordination at St Mary's Wendover along with many of the church family





and see her celebrate her first Holy Communion the next day. Christoph accompanied us to the Archdeacon's Visitation at St Mary's Princes Risborough where we were sworn in as Churchwardens for the year ahead.

Over the summer we turned to some housekeeping tasks. We did our annual inventory of all the church valuables and are pleased to report that all was in order. We devised a new system numbering all the valuables to help make the process easier in the future. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the diligent Fabric Team for their hard work throughout the year ensuring that our church was maintained, prioritising important jobs and keeping the PCC informed. Kathleen, the PCC member responsible for Health & Safety, carried out the annual Risk Assessments on our three buildings and we would like to thank her for her expertise and guidance in this area.

It was wonderful to have the church family together for a weekend of celebrating our St. Mary's Festival in September. On the Saturday morning Cathy organised a Litter Pick around the local area and the White House invited us to enjoy their garden in the afternoon where tea was served and families could use their pool and enjoy the garden. On Sunday we had a celebration service followed by a BBQ and children's activities and then Vestry Teas and a concert by Alumini 4.

Harvest saw our church beautifully decorated with autumnal produce and generous donations of supermarket vouchers and cash were donated during the morning services. We were back in Church that afternoon for a Confirmation service with Bishop Tim and proudly supported the twelve candidates as they took this important step in their faith journeys.

November was the time to honour those we had lost with the Remembrance Sunday Service and our Remembering Loved Ones Service. The latter was a chance for those who had lost a loved one to sit quietly in a reflective service, light a candle and pray, with tea and a chat afterwards. Denham Parish said goodbye to church family member and Lay Reader Emeritus, Joyce Tearall in 2023 and were so grateful for her devoted service and the memories we held.

When Advent arrived we provided the Christmas refreshments for our final PCC meeting of the year and gave thanks for all the team had achieved. Cathy organised Christmas plants for the clergy to deliver to the bereaved and housebound. Our historic building was beautifully decorated with a tree, candles, Christmas plants, flowers and greenery. We met in the vestry with other Denham ladies to prepare the Christingle oranges and eat mince pies! Advent went well with all our traditional services and local community events. We particularly loved seeing all the generations of local families worshipping in the very building that their ancestors had frequented for the last 900 years.

The Churchwardens are so grateful for their many blessings during 2023.

*(Samantha Carter and Cathy Macqueen)*

## **2023 FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESULTS**

The Annual Accounts, which have been reviewed by David Steel FCA, acting as an Independent Examiner, show a decrease of £19,242 in the General Fund, an increase £102,191 in the Fabric Fund and decreases of £4,504 in the Rector's & Churchwarden's Fund, £3,801 in the Church Growth Fund and £784 in the Give & Share Fund.

At 31 December 2023 the General Fund stood at £41,884, the Fabric Fund at £368,084, the Rector's and Churchwarden's Fund at £44,413, the Church Growth Fund at £10,945 and the Give & Share Fund at £13,873.

In total there was an increase in the combined Funds of £73,860 so that the total of all the funds stood at £479,199 at 31 December 2023 compared to £405,339 at 31 December 2022.

Cash balances at 31 December 2023 totalled £502,887 compared with £445,779 at 31 December 2022.

We were most fortunate and most blessed to receive donations of £106,000 into the Fabric Fund during the year which enabled us to claim a further £25,000 in directly associated Gift Aid that was also received in the year and has been credited to the Fabric Fund.

As a Grade 1 listed building St Mary's Church and the associated Churchyards require constant maintenance and upkeep which last year totalled £41,378, as set out in Note 7, which compares with the £27,850 incurred in 2022. With the suspension of the Fayre and the loss of that income, we need to keep the Fabric Fund robustly healthy so the incredibly generous donations in this and indeed recent years are particularly welcome.

It is such good news that the Fayre will be held again in 2024 with all proceeds earned being transferred to the Fabric Fund. I am sure that we would all like to thank the new Fayre Committee for taking on this invaluable task that not only benefits the Church but also of course the whole of Denham and the Parish as a whole.

Legacies are an invaluable part of the PCC's income and this year we received legacies totalling £6,000, gifts that were much appreciated.

Total Incoming Resources in the Unrestricted General Fund were £118,625 compared to £152,754 the previous year. Planned Christian Giving and Gift Aid at £59,315 and £15,395 respectively were very similar to the totals in the previous year. Weekly Collections at £8,911 were also up a little on the £8,646 in the previous year.

The major reductions in income to the General Fund were from Weddings & Funerals at £9,190 compared to £15,470 last year, Donations & Legacies at

£8,300 compared to £22,828 and Church houses rental income at £nil compared to £6,820 last year. In addition, the transfer from the Growth Fund was reduced to £4,250 compared to £7,750 last year.

The rental income received from St Mark's Church is shown at £5,850 with the expenditure at £4,453. Members of the church community have undertaken a number of running repairs and essential maintenance at St Mark's Church Hall but it is likely that in future years more substantial maintenance costs and upgrades will be unavoidable.

Total Costs in the General Fund reduced to £137,867 from £144,723 the previous year. Whilst most of the individual cost headings were in line with the previous year steps were taken to trim back on discretionary expenditure where possible without damaging the activities of the Church.

The PCC has targeted a figure equivalent to three months costs as the appropriate level below which the General Fund should not fall which in our case is about £35,000. The budget for 2024 assumes a reduced loss that will leave the General Fund below although close to this target, as a consequence we will be looking to ways to bolster the General Fund during 2024 so as to bring us back to this target.

The General Fund relies very heavily on the most generous Planned Christian Giving and the associated Gift Aid that between them account for 63% of our total General Fund income. I would like to thank everyone who makes these donations most sincerely as without them the Church in Denham would have to be scaled back significantly as surpluses in other Funds cannot be used to support the General Fund.

In view of the losses in the General Fund donations to Charities have reduced this year £10,533 compared to £18,746 last year. Full details of this expenditure are shown in Note 6.

However when setting out the details of our direct Charitable gifts we should also look at the fantastic efforts of the Give & Share Team whose donations to those in need in our Parish totalled £11,447 compared to £8,791 last year. Details of this expenditure are given in Note 8. A number of people help with Give and Share but without doubt the driving forces are Craig and Caroline and it is only right that their incredible Christian commitment to this Fund, and all it stands for in our community, should be applauded and recognised. Thank you Craig and thank you Caroline.

Expenditure from the Fabric Fund remains in line with historic levels and full details are given in Notes 7 and 10.

We are expecting this expenditure on the fabric of the buildings to increase significantly in the short and medium term as the church building has significant

problems with damp and other structural issues. Professional advice has indicated the actions that may need to be taken and it is intended to take these a step at a time and assess the impact of that remedial work before moving to the next stage. In that way it is hoped that the most expensive remedial work can either be avoided or reduced in scope.

The Rector's and Churchwarden's Fund has begun to benefit from the higher rates of interest now payable to deposited funds, a trend that will continue in 2024.

The Church Growth Fund that stands at £10,945 at the year end and is ring-fenced to support appropriate expenditure for new growth activities as and when required.

With cash balances of £502,887 the Parish remains financially secure but our budgets indicate that 2024 will be a demanding year that may well see significant and increasing deficits in all our Funds that may need to be further addressed as we go forward.

It is self-evident that without the faithful commitment of all givers, the work of Denham Parish Church could not continue. Thank you all very much for your support in 2023 and through the coming year.

Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the APCM as we will be with our daughter and her family in Australia but if anyone has any questions they would like to raise with me please do so when I am back at the end of April.

Finally, I feel it might be appropriate for me to step down as Treasurer in the not too distant future. If you'd like to find out more about the role and how you could help as part of the finance team, I would love to talk to you.

*(Mike Stewart, PCC Treasurer)*

**Correspondence Address for the PCC:**

St Mary's Church Office

Village Road, Denham, UB9 5BH

**The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin Denham**

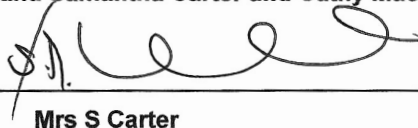
**Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2023**

	2023	2022
	£	£
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Short term deposits	489,284	406,209
Bank current account	13,603	39,570
	<hr/> 502,887	<hr/> 445,779
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Creditors and accruals	(28,787)	(40,440)
Other Debtors	5,099	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>£ 479,199</b>	<b>£ 405,339</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Funds</b>		
General Fund (unrestricted)	41,884	61,126
Fabric Fund (designated)	368,084	265,893
Rectors & Churchwardens Discretionary Fund (restricted)	44,413	48,917
Church Growth Fund (restricted)	10,945	14,746
Give & Share (restricted)	13,873	14,657
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	<b>£ 479,199</b>	<b>£ 405,339</b>

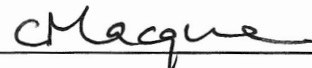
Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 6 February 2024 and signed on their behalf by  
Rev. Christoph Lindner (Rector) and Samantha Carter and Cathy MacQueen (Church Wardens)



Rev C Lindner



Mrs S Carter



Mrs C MacQueen

**The Notes below form part of these Accounts**

**Accounting Policies**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 1997 together with applicable accounting standards and the Charities SORP

**Funds**

The General Fund represent the funds of the PCC that are not subject to any restrictions regarding their use & are available for application to the general purposes of the PCC.

The Fabric Fund is designated for improvements, major repairs, insurance and maintenance of the Church and the Churchyard.

The Give & Share Fund is a Restricted Fund for charitable purposes in and around the Parish.

The Church Growth Fund is a Restricted Fund for the growth of the Christian message in the Parish and beyond as deemed appropriate by the PCC.

**Accounting Records**

The accounts, include all transactions, assets & liabilities for which the PCC are responsible in Law. They do not include the accounts of Church groups that owe their affiliation to another body nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

**Incoming Resources**

Collections, planned giving & donations are recognised when received by or on behalf of the PCC. Income tax recoverable on covenants or gift aid donations is recognised when received. Funds raised by the Village Fayre are accounted for net of associated costs.

**Assets**

Consecrated & beneficial property is excluded from the accounts by s96(2)a of the Charities Act 1993, and no value is placed on movable church furnishings. All expenditure is written off as incurred.

**Extracted from the Annual Report of the PCC for the Year Ended 31st December 2023**

**The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Denham**

**Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2023**

	Note	General Fund (Unrestricted)		Fabric Fund ( Designated)		Rectors & Churchwardens Fund (Restricted)		Church Growth Fund (Restricted)		Give & Share Fund (Restricted)		Consolidation Adjustment		Total Funds	
		2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>															
Weekly collections		8,911	8,646											8,911	8,646
Planned Christian Giving (PCG)		59,315	60,003											59,315	60,003
Gift Aid Tax recovered		15,395	16,054	25,000	22,500									40,395	38,554
Donations & Legacies		8,300	22,828	106,000	93,163		56,209		600	9,290	10,530			123,590	183,330
<b>Incoming resources from donors</b>		<b>91,921</b>	<b>107,531</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>115,663</b>		<b>56,209</b>		<b>600</b>	<b>9,290</b>	<b>10,530</b>			<b>232,211</b>	<b>290,533</b>
Vestry Teas & Sunday coffees		-	1,349											-	1,349
Miscellaneous		3,350	3,961							745	-			4,095	3,961
<b>Other voluntary income resources</b>		<b>3,350</b>	<b>5,310</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,095</b>	<b>5,310</b>
Wedding & Funeral Fees		9,190	15,470											9,190	15,470
Denham & Patronal Festival Fairs				2,688	1,505									2,688	1,505
St Marks Church - Rental Income		5,850	6,400											5,850	6,400
Church Houses Rent Received		-	6,820											-	6,820
<b>Income from Charitable &amp; Ancillary Trading</b>	1	<b>15,040</b>	<b>28,690</b>	<b>2,688</b>	<b>1,505</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,728</b>	<b>30,195</b>
Income from Investments - interest		4,064	3,473	9,881		1,968	208	449		628		(4,250)		16,990	3,681
Transfer from Growth Fund		4,250	7,750											0	-
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>		<b>118,625</b>	<b>152,754</b>	<b>143,569</b>	<b>117,168</b>	<b>1,968</b>	<b>56,417</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>10,663</b>	<b>10,530</b>	<b>(4,250)</b>	<b>(7,750)</b>	<b>271,024</b>	<b>329,719</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>															
Gas & Electricity		7,877	6,549											7,877	6,549
St Francis House	2	2,021	810											2,021	810
St Francis Church		-	143											-	143
St Marks House	3	4,641	4,942											4,641	4,942
St Marks Church	4	4,453	3,233											4,453	3,233
Cleaning		1,699	1,876											1,699	1,876
Secretarial Expenses		13,920	12,937											13,920	12,937
Printing, Post, Books & Stationery		1,573	1,593											1,573	1,593
Clergy Administration & Training		3,998	3,588											3,998	3,588
Telephone & Internet Connection		973	786											973	786
Organist		5,995	6,468											5,995	6,468
Parish Share		66,300	68,115											66,300	68,115
Childrens Ministry		709	1,100											709	1,100
Parish Hospitality		944	663											944	663
Website & IT		1,711	1,654											1,711	1,654
Associate Ministers	5	12,101	14,632											12,101	14,632
Donations to Charities	6	4,283	11,246			6,250	7,500							10,533	18,746
Miscellaneous		4,669	4,388			222	0							4,891	4,388

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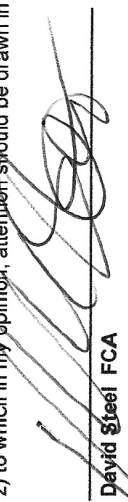
Extracted from the Annual Report of the PCC for the Year Ended 31st December 2023  
The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Denham  
Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

	Note	General Fund		Fabric Fund ( Designated)		Rectors & Churchwardens Fund (Restricted)		Church Growth Fund (Restricted)		Give & Share Fund (Restricted)		Consolidation Adjustment		Total Funds	
		2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £
Fabric Fund Expenditure	7		41,378	27,850										41,378	27,850
Give & Share Fund Expenditure	8									11,447	8,791			11,447	8,791
Church Growth Fund Expenditure	9					4,250	7,750								
Transfer to General Fund												(4,250)	(7,750)		
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>		<b>137,867</b>	<b>144,723</b>	<b>41,378</b>	<b>27,850</b>	<b>6,472</b>	<b>7,500</b>	<b>4,250</b>	<b>7,750</b>	<b>11,447</b>	<b>8,791</b>	<b>(4,250)</b>	<b>(7,750)</b>	<b>197,164</b>	<b>188,864</b>
<b>NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES</b>															
Balances brought forward at 1st January		(19,242)	8,031	102,191	89,318	(4,504)	48,917	(3,801)	(7,150)	(784)	1,739	-	-	73,860	140,855
		61,126	53,095	265,893	176,575	48,917	-	14,746	21,896	14,657	12,918	-	-	405,339	264,484
<b>BALANCES C/FWD AT 31st DECEMBER</b>		<b>41,884</b>	<b>61,126</b>	<b>368,084</b>	<b>265,893</b>	<b>44,413</b>	<b>48,917</b>	<b>10,945</b>	<b>14,746</b>	<b>13,873</b>	<b>14,657</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>479,199</b>	<b>405,339</b>

**Independent Examiner's Statement**

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention :-

- 1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
  - a) to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 41 of the Act and
  - b) to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the requirement of the Act, as also contained in the Church Accounting Regulations 1997 have not been met.
- 2) to which in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

  
 David Steel FCA

Date: 21/2/24

**The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin - Denham**  
**Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2023**

	2023	2022		2023	2022
	£	£		£	£
<b>1 Church House Rents</b>			<b>7 Fabric Fund</b>		
St Marks House - net	-	6,820	Pew Cushions	3,516	-
	-	<b>6,820</b>	Chancel Roof	3,014	-
<b>2 St Francis House</b>			Soakaway Inspections	1,755	-
Insurance	663	604	Churchyard East Gateway	8,148	-
Plumbing	710	98	Vestry Toilet	1,680	-
Alarm	108	108	Heart Defibrillator (St Marks)	1,699	-
Other Maintenance	90	-	Other	698	1,399
Fees	450	-	Professional Fees	816	992
	<b>2,021</b>	<b>810</b>	Insurance	4,824	4,267
<b>3 St Marks House</b>			Churchyard	6,583	6,345
Insurance	788	708	Maintenance (See Note 10)	8,645	7,246
Alarm Service	108	108	Asbestos Survey	-	816
Painting, Decorating & Electrical	278	1,335	Church Doors	-	2,664
Plumbing & Heating Repairs	2,010	1,380	Lightening Protectors	-	3,083
Other Maintenance	316	411	Organ Repairs	-	1,038
Garden	-	1,000			
New Oven	841	-			
Fees	300	-			
	<b>4,641</b>	<b>4,942</b>		<b>41,378</b>	<b>27,850</b>
<b>4 St Marks Church</b>			<b>8 Give &amp; Share Fund</b>		
Utilities	2,545	1,443	Packaging & Products	7,887	5,982
Cleaning & Maintenance	1,223	1,135	Storage	1,800	1,800
Insurance	525	525	Harvest Festival Vouchers	250	-
Grass Cutting	160	130	Urgent Support Payments	1,460	260
	<b>4,453</b>	<b>3,233</b>	Admin	50	-
<b>5 Associate Ministers</b>			IT Equipment	-	400
Rent	3,800	9,600	Printing	-	349
Utilities	2,303	2,410		<b>11,447</b>	<b>8,791</b>
Council Tax	5,998	2,622	<b>9 Church Growth Fund</b>		
	<b>12,101</b>	<b>14,632</b>	Transfer to General Fund	4,250	7,750
<b>6 Charitable Donations</b>				<b>4,250</b>	<b>7,750</b>
<b>Mission Partners</b>			<b>10 Maintenance</b>		
Tearfund	2,900	3,600	Waste Collection	2,085	1,900
Trinity / SHOC	2,250	3,600	Security	1,999	800
Wycliffe Bible Translations	1,250	3,000	Fire Extinguishers	232	622
Bible Reading Fellowship	1,250	3,000	Clock Annual Maintenance	266	266
Church Army	1,250	3,000	Mowing Equipment Repairs	876	791
<b>Other Charities</b>			Heating Maintenance	1,897	852
Care in the Family	1,250	-	Electrical Repairs & PAT Testing	597	-
Tearfund - Ukrainian Appeal	-	2,000	Miscellaneous	693	267
Royal British Legion	250	500	St Mary's Sign Repairs	-	960
Childrens Society	133	46	St Francis Fence Repairs	-	788
	<b>10,533</b>	<b>18,746</b>		<b>8,645</b>	<b>7,246</b>

*In 2023 £1,250 of the above donations to each of the Mission Partners as shown in Note 6 were charged to the Rectors and Churchwardens Fund. All the Christmas collections were shared equally between SHOC and Tearfund.*



# REPORTS FROM OUR GROUPS AND MINISTRIES: FROM A TO Z

## ALPHA, EVANGELISM and MISSION

A couple of weeks before the start of our regular Alpha course, we invited our community to hear Azita Jabbari's story at "**From Refugee to Reverend**" at St Mary's. In spite of the inhospitable weather, many people came. Azita's story speaks of the God who calls people to follow Jesus, often in unexpected ways.

**Alpha** took place at St Mark's. After sharing a meal and watching a video presentation we split into two discussion groups. The Alpha morning focuses on the person and work of the Holy Spirit and is a significant part of the course. Here are some of things participants said about their experience:

"The course was very well presented. Healthy debate in group work. Excellent food." | "Amazing community experience." | "The course is fantastic and deepened my understanding of Christianity."

One of the fruits of our regular Alpha Courses was a **confirmation service** with Bishop Tim Wambunya in October (see "Discipleship").

**Presence:** Some years back our church took part in the course "Leading Your Church into Growth" and it helpfully explains the stages of church growth as **prayer, presence, proclamation and persuasion**. As a parish church we had various opportunities for presence - to be part of our community or to invite the community and serve them at particular moments in the year: the **Warm Space** at St Mark's early in the year (see separate report) and the activities around the **Coronation Weekend** and our special **St Mary's Festival** celebrating 900 years of St Mary's (see separate report) were such occasions.

Of course our **impact reaches far beyond the local parish**, not least through our five mission partners. We are committed to giving one percent of our income to each of them. At the end of 2023 our Christmas Appeal asked for support of SHOC/Trinity and Tearfund. Towards the end of 2023 the PCC reviewed our relationships with our mission partners and decided to adopt *Care for the Family* as a new partner. While Church Army will no longer be one of our five core partners, we intend to continue our good relationship with them.

*(Christoph Lindner)*

## ATC (Air Cadets)

For some years Christoph has now been leading monthly "Padre's Hours" at our local Air Training Corps (Squadron 2370), ably led by Flight Lieutenant Michael Easter RAFAC. The air cadets participated with a strong turn-out at our Remembrance Service in November.

## BAPTISMS

2023 saw a slight increase in baptisms compared with the previous year. We baptised 20 people (16 children and 4 adults). (2022: 18). We held four baptism preparation evenings. While children are typically baptised by sprinkling in the Church of England, adults have a choice of sprinkling or full immersion. Tim Macqueen requested the latter and Philip and Irene Courtenay-Luck very kindly offered the use of their indoor pool at the White House across from St Mary's.



## BELLRINGERS

My thanks as always to all the ringers for their support. After the previous year's various bouts of muffled ringing to mark the Queen's passing, it was a pleasure to ring in celebration for the Coronation. We also welcomed two visiting bands to ring a full 3 hour peal and a quarter peal on our highly-regarded bells.



*(Above: Coronation Band of Ringers)*

Ringling as a band for services generally continues about once a month to make sure we can assemble a full band, though we rang extensively over Christmas and

on New Year's Eve. We have continued to use the Ellacombe chimes on other Sundays and for a number of weddings and funerals.

We have again not needed any significant repairs this year so our finances are still in good shape helped by fees from weddings/funerals, with enough in reserve to cover likely expenses such as a broken stay (the length of wood which allows the speed of the bell to be controlled) or a replacement rope.

Ongoing health problems or other commitments limit the availability of some of the band, and with all the band now ringing competently we have space for a keen learner or two. We would also love to add to the rota for the chimes, which are far quicker to pick up (and the ropes are less scary!); maybe something that might interest a 10+ age child to do with a parent once a month? Anyone who might be interested is welcome to contact me to find out more.

*(Andrew Simpson, Tower Captain, March 2024)*

[andrew@simpson.trumail.com](mailto:andrew@simpson.trumail.com) (01895) 255594

## **CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

### **ABC of Families Ministry - by Edda Lindner**

**A for Assemblies:** Throughout the year we delivered fortnightly assemblies in both local schools. Our small, but dedicated team (Michael Carmody, Azita Jabbari, Christoph and myself) are enjoying the challenge to deliver stories from the bible in a visual and accessible way. We have witnessed the arrival of new head teachers in Denham Village School and Denham Green Academy and are encouraged how both have welcomed us warmly. One special highlight was the graduation assembly of 32 year 6 pupils at the Academy in July. We presented each school leaver with a copy of the book *It's Your Move* to help them with the significant transition from primary to secondary school. We are celebrating this strong link into our community and are so glad to be connected with the lives of many local families.

We continue to use the *Open the Book* assembly resources from *Bible Society*. Throughout the year we have told 18 key Bible stories in both places. We are very much looking forward to a slightly bigger team of storytellers in 2024.

**B for BULC YADNUS aka Sunday Club** ...Well, things haven't been front to back, but we certainly had a massive fluctuation when it comes to attendance at Sunday Club. In February the team met and re-grouped after the past couple of crazy Covid years...re-building is taking time! It has been a wonderful encouragement to have Kath Sole stepping into the role of Deputy Team Leader. Since May we have moved away from paper-based registers and are now using an online tool called Church Suite which we use at St Mary's for data management, communication and events. Some weeks we had almost a 1:1 ratio of children

and leaders, on other Sundays, like Coronation Sunday and St Mary's Festival, we had 23 children and more.

I am very grateful to each member of the team for being reliable, flexible and fun! A special mention and thank you to Tim Sole, who stepped down from helping with Sunday Club at the end of April after seven years of consistent support.

When you get a chance, please do thank him and all the current team members for the way they help children and their families to have a child-focused, caring and Christ-centred experience of gathered worship. They are: Kath Sole, Kathy Paine, Sonja Clements, Sarah Leer, Robert and Eliana Melis, Sian Reading.

We ran Sunday Club throughout the year with the exception of the summer holidays. It is our goal to grow the team in 2024 and to continue to innovate and be in close communication with families to support them as they nurture their children's faith.

### **C for Carols for All Ages aka Kids' Choir**

Something new - on Easter Sunday we had a small, but dedicated all age choir made up of three families, which was a highlight of the service. Building on this, in the autumn term we started a kid's choir with the idea of having a more regular rehearsal pattern with the goal of nurturing all these budding talents in our community and to have children help lead musical worship at church.

The choir is led by Christoph, Sian Reading and myself. We had a strong band of singers for the Family Carol service. It was a joy to see the ten children shine – the professional spotlight which we were able to use for free (courtesy of Alex Bingham from "Encore Uxbridge") added some extra sparkle. We had a little flock of choir members' younger siblings dressed up as sheep and featured prominently as part of a Carol.

### **D for Destiny - by Jane Brown or Azita Jabbari**

Destiny has grown in numbers over the past year as more of the Sunday Club children have reached 10 years old. We continue to meet on the third Sunday of the month at St Mark's hall during the Sunday service (from 10.15 – 11.45am). Attendance can be anything from 3-12 and this fluctuates with school exams and other family commitments. We have a great team with Azita, Jane Brown, Tim MacQueen and Charlotte Hearnden-Smith – the younger leaders are a great asset to the group as they engage on a different level!

We start the sessions with games and activities which allows time for the youngsters to interact and have fun together, building more friendships and community. We then have drinks and snacks, before a time of worship and then a study. Most of this last year we have been using extracts from "The Chosen" videos which portray the life of Jesus and his ministry. The thoughts and discussions after this have been very interesting and the whole group tend to get involved.

All the Destiny youth attend many different schools and we would love to create deeper connections and friendships so they all want to prioritise the Sunday get-togethers. Moving forward it would be good to organise some social events or maybe pizza nights but nothing is planned yet.

**E for Forest Church Extra:** We were able to offer two Forest Church Specials in 2023. On 1. April we had great fun making Easter gardens with eleven families and Tim Macqueen helped us think about all that is happening in nature in spring. The Advent Special was attended by 30 people of all ages. Each family made at least 1 Advent Candle arrangement, we had a winter nature quiz and heard the story of the three trees. Everyone went home feeling a bit more prepared and ready for Advent 2023. Thank you to the wonderful team who made these two special events possible!

### **F for Fire included....Lantern Light Party 31 October**

19 families signed up to our alternative Halloween event. St Mary's was filled with life and laughter. The activities included Marshmallow toasting and juggling games outdoors, face painting, biscuit decorations, dancing, craft, games and the Pumpkin Café. An excellent team of 14 people made this event possible. Thank you!

### **G for Going Deeper and Wider..**

We had a couple of meetings with a smaller group of leaders to think strategically about potential areas of development, mission and growth. These meetings in August and October have stimulated some creative ideas and we are excited to be taking some of these to the test in 2024. Watch this space and pray with us for God's guidance.

### **CHOIR**

2023 has seen Stephen settle in as the Director of Music at St. Mary's, Denham. He plays and rehearses the choir both before and after services for all but the first Sundays of months. The choir has approximately 16 singers when at full strength, gaining three new regular members during the year. The choir's repertoire has been developed with new pieces being discovered for them by Stephen whilst retaining many of the well-known music of their repertoire. Thanks go to Caroline Ashcroft for updating choir through email, Tina Williams for keeping a choir attendance chart and Sandy Wickenden for supplying new choir folders.

Planning for 2024 includes a choir 'Come and Sing' choral workshop followed by a trip to hear Choral Evensong at St. Albans Cathedral in May, which if popular can become a regular feature of the choir's year and involvement in the re-introduced May Fayre on the second May Bank Holiday. *(Stephen Armstrong)*

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

Only three meetings of the Deanery Synod were held during the year of the usual four. The first meeting at St Georges, Little Chalfont in March dealt primarily with receiving reports in how two of our local churches were providing outreach in their parishes. The first, the host church, with a large percentage locally of social housing, has active ministry to families and children. It has a community café and a food hub and provides children's breakfasts during holiday when the schools are closed. Other local Christian churches are joining in with their initiative.

The other church at Beaconsfield also runs a community café within the church itself and also provides food support locally. There is a new children's choir and there has been a large growth in numbers. There was also report on General Synod discussions.

The second meeting in June was held here at St Mark's. We welcomed the Poulsons whose mission the Deanery supports in Honduras and heard how their work is continuing to expand and develop.

The main business dealt with safeguarding policy and it is clear that this parish is well ahead in the game though still has some work to complete.

Our final meeting in November was at St James, Gerrards Cross and dealt principally with financial matters and the parish share. The Deanery ran at a deficit and had to draw on reserves which will need to be addressed. We had a further report on the work at General Synod updating us on the debate about same sex blessings.

*(Michael Carmody)*

## **DENHAM PARISH NEWS**

Denham Parish News (DPN) continues to be issued once a quarter (December, March, June, September) as a 36-page printed colour edition, with an on-line version available on the Church website [www.denhamparish.church/magazine/](http://www.denhamparish.church/magazine/). Jenny Brown is invaluable in supporting our dedicated team of distributors who hand deliver DPN to over 350 subscribers. Although costs have risen significantly, we have kept the price at £1.50 per Issue (discounted to £5 p.a for regular subscribers) and thank all our advertisers for their ongoing support which enables us to routinely over-print so that we can give complimentary copies away at special events and as a means of outreach into the local community.

The year started with 'Gratitude' - Vox Pops messages from residents shopping in Denham Green giving thanks for friends and family, fresh air, beauty of nature – not material things, a roof over my head and a warm bed. Gratitude articles, too, for Ian Jennings (retired Associate Minister), the Warm Space initiative at St Mark's and Janet Allen's thoughts around this topic from 'Atlas of the Heart' (Brené Brown).

The autumn issue was musical, introducing our organist Stephen Armstrong, singing in the choir and thoughts around the type of music God might listen to. Our Christmas edition included photos from the St Mary's 'wheels of time' 900-year celebrations, the confirmation service and a 'Make your own Christmas angel' craft activity. In the spring we looked at families, with the Bible Detective discussing 'Family, what's the Big Idea?' and Kathy Paine shared insights into the work of Care for the Family.

Rosemary Doran has provided a 3-part series 'Memories of a Denham Girl' recalling growing up in Denham in the 1930s and 1940s, whilst Brian O'Regan shared insights into his childhood in a Catholic family. Sheila Crunden, Michael Carmody and Dom and Vicky Birkby contributed their stories of Life and Faith whilst others provided fond memories about Joyce Tearall and Stephanie Hilhouse.

Brian has interviewed the Denham Air Cadets and the Martin-Baker Aircraft Company Ltd, Sandy sensitively covered bereavement at Christmas, Kath Sole provided instructions on how to make 3D letters and Yubi Kang wrote a beautiful Easter poem.

In all issues of Denham Parish News, Christoph has provided articles and editorial support and Peter Wager continues to take our words and pictures and create an outstanding final product. Thank you - DPN is very much a team effort.

*(Cathy Macqueen, Editor)*

## **DENHAM VILLAGE FAYRE**

One casualty of the Covid years was the May Fayre. After putting out a call to those who want to help bring it back, a new Fayre Committee was formed in the second half of the year, working hard to bring back the Fayre in in 2024. A big thank you to the members of the new committee for taking on this role.

## **DISCIPLESHIP**

At the heart of discipleship at Denham Parish Church are our small groups - lifegroups and online "Bible Book Clubs", some of which also have occasional social gatherings. A new lifegroup, led by Azita and Kamran Jabbari, that grew out of Alpha now meets on Monday evenings in their home.

Pastoral care is a natural part of every small group. It is our dream that every church member can find a small group that helps them to grow in faith and friendship.

Small group studies alternate between times when we track the Sunday readings or study the materials prepared to accompany a particular sermon series and other times when the groups each decide on a theme or book of the bible to

study. In the autumn most of our small groups joined in with the Sunday sermon series on the Book of Romans. We used an excellent resource by Bible Society, presented by Andrew Ollerton. One group were so inspired by the video teaching on location that they are planning a study trip to Rome in 2024.

The role of lifegroup leaders is central in strengthening the core of our church. They met once a term on Zoom in 2023.

Apart from the Romans series in the autumn, other sermon series to help us grow as disciples were “Thriving not just surviving” (Lent), and “Good Call” focusing on how we hear God’s voice and receive his guidance. The latter was chosen by our church family, from a short list of suggestions provided by the PCC.

One particular celebration in the life of our church was the confirmation service with Bishop Tim Wambunye. Twelve candidates were confirmed, eleven from our own church, of whom many had previously taken part in Alpha.

*(Christoph Lindner)*

## **FABRIC REPORT**

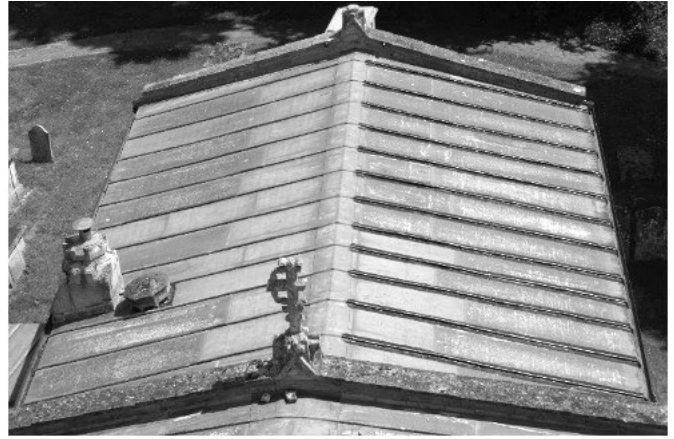
### **Introduction**

This report summarizes works carried out on the main church building and surrounding churchyard, considered by the PCC throughout the year to be required, practical and affordable; the aim is to maintain the fabric of the fine Grade 1 listed building that we are all proud to call Our Church. As has been the case for the last eight years, the Fabric Team serves to report on and recommend projects to the PCC for its due consideration and authorisation. For larger projects, outside professional assistance is required. With project management services supplied by Evans Crawley (our preferred chartered surveyors), appropriately skilled trade contractors are commissioned to deal with all the practical works under the watchful supervision of the Fabric Team. The more straight forward maintenance tasks are addressed by an enthusiastic band of church members, operating as churchyard ‘working (garden) parties’ – new helpers are always welcome.

### **Projects undertaken in 2023**

- Middle Churchyard - Headstone Ivy Clearing – a start was made by the gathered working party, soon realising that perhaps additional help (paid workers) should be considered for the more challenging churchyard maintenance tasks.





- The Churchyard Standard Rose replacement scheme reached stage 5 in March that saw a further eleven standards planted and then tended through the drier periods of the summer, culminating in another stunning showing, way into the autumn.
- In June, contractor Summit Roofing, carried out repairs to the cracked lead rolls of the south chancel roof; the work being carried out under the faculty granted by the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Oxford, with the advice to replace entire roof covering sheets within three years.
- After lengthy dialogue with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) at Oxford, (fifteen months), contractor Corinthian Stone rebuilt the brick piers of the NE churchyard pedestrian gateway in November.
- And nearly, so very nearly completed within the calendar year (so I'm cheating and including it within this report, given that most of the 'spade work' had extended over nine months of the year. Ha!): the final stage of upgrading the rainwater drainage system, around the north-east corner of church and vestry, with new gully pots, drainage pipe runs and a soak-away. Tick (big)!



## **Fabric projects for 2024**

The Fabric Team is aware that over recent years, the fabric projects undertaken have been driven by guidance provided in the Damp Survey of 2019 (Hutton+Rostron), the Quinquennial Report of 2021 (Evans Crawley), and by reacting to general maintenance and repair issues that arose.

Going forward, there are likely to be additional drivers when considering the fabric projects for our attention; schemes relating to church building space development and any fitting recommendations coming out of the energy and decarbonisation survey report from December 2023.

Notwithstanding, a summary list of possible projects follows, for the record.

### ***Minor works - requiring professional help***

- *Repointing works – Ground gutter (QI 4.8); Boiler Room wall (QR 5.14); Boundary wall, Village Road*
- *Repointing of external wall cracks in flint cladding*
- *Expert re-assessment of the decay in the timber beams of the Clock Chamber floor of the tower*
- *Inspection of the bells by professional bell hangers (recommended to approach Taylors)*
- *Repair and redecoration of the north aisle, south aisle and nave in sequence*

### ***Major works – involved and costly***

- *Replacing the lead sheeting on the chancel roof*
- *Stone repairs – external buttresses, door arches, weathered stones*
- *Strengthening oak timber floor beams of the Clock Chamber (dependent upon new assessment of death watch beetle damage)*
- *Churchyard graves – decaying structure of some tombs*
- *Boundary walls – ivy plant growth removal + repair where necessary*
- *Main churchyard path re-surfacing – around church and vestry*

*(Robert Ash on behalf of the St Mary's Fabric Team)*

## GIVE & SHARE

This year's report reflects the incredible work that *Give and Share* has done this year. On top of Craig's continued support to families with gift vouchers and food parcels when needed, it has also been our busiest Christmas to date with a phenomenal 270 hampers going out before Christmas and a further 60 food



parcels going out in January. Food was also donated to one of our mission partners, Trinity. All this has come at a considerable cost but has been a joy to do. Christmas alone cost a little over £8,000 and we have fundraised all year to provide for this. We would like to thank those individuals and companies that have supported us, without your help *Give and Share* would not be able to help as many as we have, so thank you everyone.

It's always good to hear heartwarming stories and this year we would like to share two with you. It really is the reason Craig started *Give and Share* in the first place.

Three years ago we went to a young lady on Christmas Eve with a last request for a hamper. When we got to this lady and her little 3-year-old, it was obvious times were hard. Under the Christmas tree was a colouring book and pens, nothing else. She stated that his dad had left and he was a good boy and would understand, but Craig knew he could do something amazing for them. When we left we came home, sorted through some donated toys and created a Santa sack for this little boy. Craig drove it back to his mum and she was in tears, she was so grateful. Christmas night Craig had a message saying, how did we know he loves Spider-Man (what boy doesn't lol) and he loved everything. We expected to get another call for help the following year, but nothing came. Last year we (Craig and Caroline) were out when we bumped into this mum who came running over. Immediately we recognised her and she proudly told us things had improved considerably for her in those three years, she had met a nice man and was getting married, they had bought a house, and the little boy was doing well at school. It was so nice to hear this as most of *Give and Share's* work is anonymous. We very rarely hear the outcome and have to just settle knowing that at that time you helped someone.

The second one was whilst doing the shopping for the hampers last Christmas. A lady came over seeing Craig's trolley piled high and asked what he was doing. He explained what all the trolleys were for but not naming the charity. She said she had received a hamper from her son's school last year and as she had lost her job it was very much appreciated and made their Christmas, it turned out it was from *Give and Share*.

*Give and Share* want to help loads more people this year and look forward to another successful year.

*(The Give and Share Team)*

## **MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

After a Covid-related catch-up in 2021 with a total of seven weddings, numbers remained low in 2023 with only two weddings and one renewal of marriage vows. Marking a special wedding anniversary with a service is a meaningful way to celebrate such milestones - something to consider and to recommend to more people!

Our marriage preparation helps couples to understand and embrace the vows they are going to make and to build strong foundations for a lifelong marriage. We are not just putting on an event for them, but building a relationship with the couple. This can be helpful later on when a couple have some challenges to overcome and feel able to approach the vicar who prepared them for help and advice.

## **PASTORAL CARE**

Our pastoral care in the two residential care homes (Denham Manor and White Plains) continued with monthly services of Holy Communion and other pastoral visits. The work of activities managers in both homes is central to the wellbeing of residents and we are grateful for good relationships. Members of our choir joined us in both homes for short carol services which were appreciated by the residents and a source of much joy. At Denham Manor we even sang on the first floor corridor so residents who are largely bed-bound were able to benefit.

Various groups hosted at St Mark's and run by volunteers, as well as the Higher Denham Luncheon Club provide wonderful pastoral support for local residents. It was a joy to join them occasionally and to see the good work they are doing.

In 2023 we said good-bye to some of our much loved church members and held a total of 15 funerals and 21 burials of ashes. Increasing numbers of families make use of our live-streaming facilities to help friends and families members living in different parts of the country and the world to take part in these services. Pastoral care at the time of death and through the period of mourning is an

essential way of caring for members of our community. Our The Haven group and special services of remembering loved ones all play an important part.

Lifegroups continue to be the bedrock of our pastoral care for one another. Please see the separate report under DISCIPLESHIP.

One aspect of pastoral care that is usually “flying under the radar” is the importance of hospitality, regular encounters and encouragements. That is one reason why we are asking those who can physically come to St Mary’s Church on a Sunday to give it a go after a long time of taking part online. Being together in one place, singing together, smiling at someone else, having conversations before and after church over a cuppa, are all parts of being a church *family*. We now offer refreshments after all 10.30 services thanks to a small team and many extra helping hands. Over the summer months we invited church members to bring a packed lunch on the first Sunday and share it together. Edda and Christoph hosted some simple Wednesday lunches with church members at the Rectory. Connecting over food is a wonderful way to strengthen friendships and support one another and it can be quite a simple affair without too much preparation - they key is spending time together. If you are planning similar food-based events, do consider inviting those who live on their own!

Our cream tea at a the Rectory in August had to be relocated to St Mark’s, due to rainy weather, but it was nevertheless enjoyed by many and gave us the opportunity to take the “golden picture frame” photos for our 900-year celebration. Some of them are printed on the cover of this report.

## PRAYER

Every work of God is begun in prayer and we encourage all church members to develop a daily rhythm of prayer and for groups to open and close meetings with prayer.



Kath Sole and Cathy Macqueen have continued to be creative with several prayer trails around St Mary’s, giving passers-by an opportunity to pause for a moment and reflect. Many spiritual journeys have started with such a seemingly insignificant impulse! In the run-up to Pentecost they created a prayer room at St Mary’s Vestry. Much creativity went into it and everyone who spent an hour praying there found it enriching.

Our monthly prayer gathering *The Well* on the second Monday of the month at St Mark’s continued in 2023 with a focus on worship, intercessory prayer and listening to God. Regular attendees form a relatively small group, but several people joined us for the first time.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

Safeguarding was always a standing agenda item at our nine PCC meetings during the year and in line with the Church of England Policy and Practice Guidance, the PCC paid due regard to the House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. I continued as the Parish Safeguarding Officer and DBS Recruiter and Verifier and Victoria Lucas continued as the DBS Administrator and Verifier. It was so encouraging that the PCC took an active interest in keeping Safeguarding at the heart of our church family and not being afraid to ask questions about our policies and procedures to ensure they understood their effectiveness.

The Parish Safeguarding Policy had its annual review in March and was adopted by the PCC. The policy was then displayed in all our church buildings and posted on our website with a link on the home page. As per guidance we provided a copy of our policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders to all new volunteers at the beginning of their recruitment process. We displayed posters entitled 'Promoting a Safer Church' in all our church buildings and all our volunteers were provided with access to the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook and pocket guides. All three of these were useful tools highlighting local and diocesan contact details for those with concerns and useful information on what to do if a disclosure was made to them.

An important part of the safer recruitment process for volunteers and paid staff is the Learning Development Framework. At the beginning of the year 86% of our volunteers had completed all their required training. By the end of the year this had reached 97% The one volunteer still needing to undergo training was new to their role. Our dedicated PCC led from the front with their training and by the end of the summer 100% had completed or refreshed their required training. All our volunteers undertook online Safeguarding Training through the Church of England portal. I met up with one PCC member to help them with this process. We both benefitted from talking through various scenarios and how best to deal with them. Throughout the year 28 training modules covering Basic Safeguarding Awareness, Foundation Safeguarding, Raising awareness of Domestic Abuse the Safer Recruitment & People Management and 1 Leadership course were completed. I was so proud that our Parish volunteers invested a total of 60 hours on training during the year. I attended 2 Parish Safeguarding Officer meetings with Tsungai Muchegwa, our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and was delighted that she came to talk at the Deanery Synod meeting that we hosted in June. She talked about how better staffed the area safeguarding team was and stressed that they were always there to help us with recruitment, training and referrals.

We continued to use the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance issued by the House of Bishops to help create and maintain a safer positive environment that reinforces the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. We continued to use the electronic Safeguarding Dashboard portal to help streamline policies and track progress. We remained compliant with Foundation Level 1 with information on our policies and procedures and Level 2 on safer activities. By the end of the year we had reached Level 3, the final level, on safer practices and completed 77% of the Dashboard.

We safely recruited 5 new volunteers which included requesting Disclosure and Barring Service criminal record checks. We also renewed DBS checks for 13 existing volunteers. A few of them had already registering with the free DBS Update service which enables portability between roles. We continued to use APCS (Access Personal Checking System) as our Umbrella Body and always found them very supportive. We were sad to see 6 volunteers including 2 PCC members step down after many years of loyal service. We finished the year with a total of 32 volunteers, 2 paid staff and 3 members of clergy in a wide range of ministries able to work with children and vulnerable adults.

I was pleased that volunteers and staff approached me to ask for general guidance on Safeguarding and help with training during the year and that no concerns were brought to my attention.

In November Safeguarding Sunday was again highlighted at both our Sunday services. We endorsed Safeguarding being at the heart of our Christian faith with prayers, songs and blessings provided by Thirtyone:eight, an independent Christian safeguarding charity.

In 2024 we aim to strive for 100% on the Safeguarding Dashboard and start using the Safeguarding Hub, a new tool to help keep track of where existing volunteers are with their training and DBS certificates and keep track of the recruitment process for new volunteers.

With constant challenges and hurdles in today's world we seem to have more policies and procedures than ever to comply with but good Safeguarding is paramount. At Denham Parish Church we strive to achieve what is required of us by praying, welcoming, sharing and daring like Jesus. Our PCC and Ministry Team understand that Safeguarding is for everyone and about everyone. I would like to say an enormous thank you to all the dedicated children's and vulnerable adult group leaders for their constant support with endorsing and promoting Safeguarding. By encouraging their teams of volunteers day to day, following good practice, doing regular training and being vigilant at all times they strive to keep everyone in their care safe. May they feel the love of God bless them and their work.

*(Samantha Carter, Parish Safeguarding Officer)*

## **ST FRANCIS HOUSE**

Nnamdi Maduka and his family have continued to live in St Francis House throughout the year.

There have been minor costs from routine maintenance and insurance that are shown in note 2 to the Financial Accounts.

Since the end of the year there has been some additional maintenance issues that are likely to lead to increased expenditure in 2024. *(Mike Stewart)*

## **ST MARK'S HALL**

The committee met three times over the year, twice at St Mark's Hall and once on Zoom. Michele Lee has taken over from Anne Thomas as the new Chairperson with Edda Lindner as the Vice Chair. The committee also consists of Rev. Christoph Lindner, Brian O'Regan (Fabric and financial Lead) Samantha Carter (Safeguarding and Display Board Lead) and Azita Jabbari. Julie Laughland has kindly agreed to write the minutes for our meetings. The role of caretaker remains vacant.

The committee agreed in January, a *Point of Reference* document for the management team at St Mark's Hall to have a reference point for the aims and the main points of management for running St Mark's Hall.

The committee reviewed the hire fees and terms and conditions for hire which has now been raised to £25 for the first hour and £15 per following hour. Discounts remain in place for regular hirers. We have had a very successful year with hiring the hall and I am happy to report that our regular hirers have continued - Madeline Paton Luncheon Club, Rainbows, Brownies, the Monday Club, Table Tennis Club, Harefield Hospital Cardiac Rehab Clinic, The Indian Catholic Prayer Group, DPC Dementia Coffee Morning and Denham Wives. In addition, Little Lions continue to run weekly during term time and St Mary's have also continue with the bereavement group, "The Well" prayer gathering and more recently the monthly Café Church has resumed. The St Mary's *Give and Share* team were able to have full use of the Hall to store and pack all their parcels for the Christmas delivery in the locality.

We have also seen an increase this year for one-off hirers which has mainly been for birthday parties. Hirers are reminded to ensure that they leave the Hall as it was found as we have had a couple of incidences of the hall being left in a poor state.

As the fridge came to end of its life, we have not replaced it as this was hardly used but will monitor any need for one during the year. We have also replaced the Urn with two kettles.

In January, St Mark's Hall hosted a Warm Space every Wednesday afternoon for six weeks. *(Please see report on Warm Space)*



Minor repairs have continued to be carried out in the year and the Hall has continued to have an annual inspection. The committee are currently looking into having Wi-Fi at the Hall as this been identified by church groups and hirers as a need.

I would like to thank all the committee for their hard work during the year.

*(Michele Lee)*

## **ST MARK'S HOUSE**

Azita Jabbari and her family have continued to live in St Mark's House throughout the year.

There have been minor costs from routine maintenance and insurance that are shown in note 2 to the Financial Accounts.

Additional maintenance and repairs will be incurred in 2024

*(Mike Stewart)*

## **ST MARY'S PATRONAL FESTIVAL**

... was a special one in 2023 as we marked 900 years of St Mary's Church. A mixed programme across two days saw many people in the local community engage with the activities.

On Saturday we combined forces with Denham Parish Council for a litter-pick around Denham Village and the Country Park, with Sharon Williams providing refreshments afterwards. In the afternoon The White House opened its garden for us and Charlene Haar (from the Denham History Online project) gave us a slice of Denham History in a packed Vestry.

On Sunday we welcomed Ian Jennings back for our celebration service, followed by a barbecue, children's activities and vestry teas. The day was rounded off with an excellent concert by Alumni 4 under the leadership of our organist Stephen Armstrong *(see photo below)*.



All the funds raised help us to resource our ministry and mission and look after our church building. This year we had an auction for nine commemorative glasses of St Mary's which helped us to raise a substantial sum.

A big thank you to everyone who volunteered to make this celebration a reality!

## **THE HAVEN**

Whether a bereavement is last month, last week, last year or many years ago Azita and I are aware that it can be a very distressing and challenging life experience. Everyone is welcome at Azita's home (the house next to St Marks Hall) on the last Wednesday of the month at 4pm when we talk together over tea and cake, sharing our stories and experiences. Everyone in the group is accepting of each other, whatever stage of the bereavement journey they are experiencing.

We have an occasional social events too which seems to be appreciated by those who attend. We have had eighteen members during the year, some of whom have now returned to work or been ready to move on as new people arrive. We laugh together and sometimes cry together and everything in between!

*(Sandy Wickenden)*

## **WARM SPACE**

The aim of the project was to provide a warm, welcoming, non-judgemental, and safe space for the local community of Denham Green at St Mark's Hall. The project ran once a week on a Wednesday afternoon from 1.00pm to 5 pm for 7 weeks.

Those attending were offered the following:

- Hot soup and bread
- Tea and coffee and a biscuit

In addition, the following was provided:

- Volunteers readily available to talk.
- An area for young children to play.
- Board games, books, weekly newspapers, and magazines were available.
- Table tennis was set up in the side room.

Each session had up to three volunteers helping all of whom received a role description and had completed the Church of England Safeguarding online course. At least one volunteer at each session was safely recruited including being DBS checked

Over the 7 weeks 94 adults attended and 31 children.

More people came after the first few weeks, and in several cases, it was as a result of seeing the flyer, word of mouth, social media and being informed during church services.

It had been considered that during the first half of the sessions more locals and elderly would attend and that more children with parents would come in the second half of each session ie from 3 – 5 as this was after school. This proved to be the case.



We served in total: 53 Cups of coffee, 52 Cups of tea, 34 Soup and bread roll. Fresh fruit was also available which proved popular. Bread and biscuits were donated for the first 3 weeks.

In order to evaluate our project, in the last two weeks, several attendees were asked to comment on the project to explain what they felt was its success, what they enjoyed doing when they came and its limitations. In addition, the volunteers were asked the same questions as well as how useful they felt their role was.

There was a unanimous agreement from both those attending and the volunteers that the Warm Space was a great success, enjoyed by everyone and that it had provided an important purpose for the community. Those who attended found it beneficial for the following reasons:

- A welcoming environment to talk to others over a hot drink and soup.
- Somewhere to go.
- Access a safe place.
- Meet others.
- A place for their children to play with others.
- A time for parents to play board games with their children.

Some comments made by those attending were:

“I enjoyed meeting new people and talking to them”.

“My children love it and there are lots of things for them to do”.

“It was lovely to have people serve you”.

Some volunteers also commented:

“It was lovely to meet other people in the community and have time to chat to them.”

“The children seemed to really enjoy themselves and it was lovely seeing parents and their children playing board games together

*(Michele Lee and Azita Jabbari)*

## **WORSHIP**

Our Sunday morning pattern, with a weekly Holy Communion service at St Mary's at 9am, followed by a hybrid service at 10.30am, continued in 2023. We are regularly joined on the livestream by at around 20 devices or more during the service and many more catch up at a later stage. Our technology for this is compact and cost-effective. Thanks to the expertise and leadership of our main camera operator Jo Potter we are able to do a lot with very little technology, but there are occasional glitches and stresses. The planned AV upgrade will be a big improvement. New pew cushions provide a much more comfortable experience of services at St Mary's - a big thank you to Cathy Macqueen for leading this project.

Monthly services at Denham Garden Village, Denham Manor and White Plains residential care homes continued throughout the year.

In March we restarted a monthly Café Church (first Sunday at St Mark's) which has been very well attended throughout the year. Special highlights were services with guest speakers such as Sheila Crunden, who was the predecessor of Samuel Kpagheri in Togo, working for Wycliffe Bible Translators. A big thank you to everyone who helps to bake cakes, organise refreshments and host a table at this service.

Special services punctuated the year - some part of the church year rhythm, others reflecting special occasions in the life of the community and the nation - Holy Week and Easter, our “Thank you” service for Ian Jennings, the Coronation weekend, Azita's presiding for the first time at Holy Communion after her ordination as priest, Harvest, a Confirmation service with Bishop Tim Wambunye, Remembrance, Advent and Christmas.

Our “Remembering Loved Ones” service has been organised and co-lead for many years by Pam Montgomery. In 2023 she retired from this role. Thank you. Pam, for your leadership over many years!

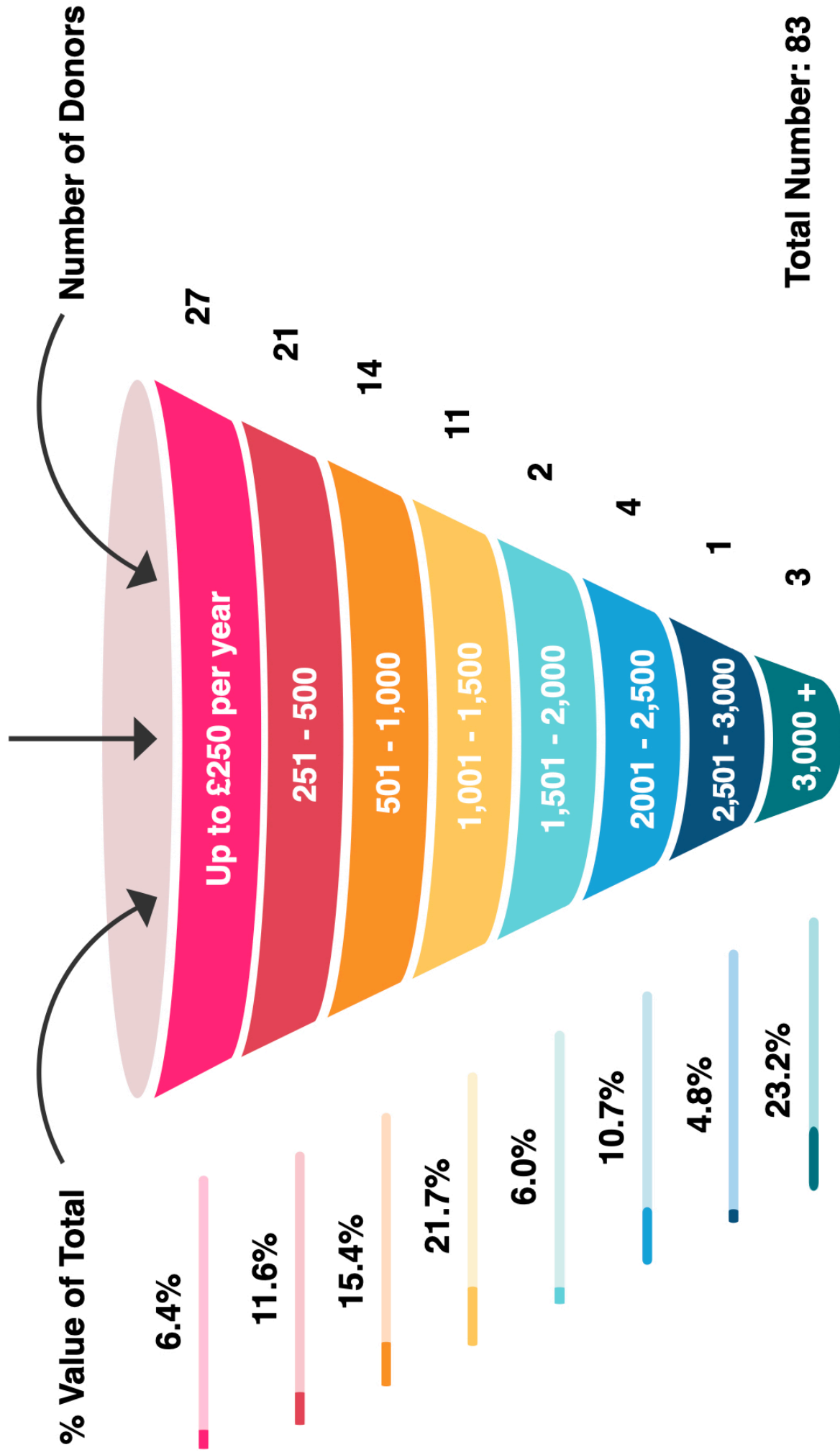
For more details on Forest Church Specials please read Edda's report on children and families above.

Over the course of the year we tend to alternate the regular lectionary readings with specific sermon series to help us develop aspects of our discipleship. In 2023 these were “Thriving not just surviving” (Lent), and “Good Call” focusing on how we hear God's voice and receive his guidance. The latter was chosen by our church family, from a short list of suggestions provided by the PCC.

At Christmas, we hosted Christmas concert or services for both local schools at St Mary's, as well as a Christingle service for Denham Village School. *(C. Lindner)*

# Regular Giving in 2023

NB: The total number of donors represents more than 83 people, as couples tend to give together.





**Confirmation with Bishop Tim**



**Thank you, Ian!**