

Annual Report 2024

Parish of St Mary the Virgin



"Lighthouse" Holiday Club Team





School Assemblies Team



Christingle Crib Service

**Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Denham
Annual Meeting of Parishioners and
Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 11th May 2025, 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 28th April 2024
6. Matters arising

Reports

7. Presentation of the copy of the church Electoral Roll
8. Annual Report for 2024
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. 2025 and beyond
17. Closing Hymn and Blessing

APCM (provisional date):, Sunday 10 May 2026, 10.30am

The Parish Church of St Mary's the Virgin, Denham
Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners & Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 28th April 2024, 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 Edda Lindner). Christoph drew people's attention to the cover of the annual report which captures the 900 year celebration of St Mary's.

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

2. Vote of Thanks to the Churchwardens

The Rector gave thanks to both Churchwardens Cathy and Sam for their commitment, leadership, pastoral skills and support to the Rector and all church members. Sam has completed her six-year-term and Cathy three years. The Rector gave thanks to Sam for all she has done in her role as a Churchwarden. The congregation expressed their thanks to Sam.

3. Election of Churchwardens

Cathy Macqueen had agreed to stand again (proposed: Sam Carter , seconded: Kathy Paine). All in favour.

Jane Brown agreed to stand as Churchwarden and was elected. (proposed: Cathy Macqueen, seconded: Edda Lindner). The Rector commended Jane as Churchwarden. Jane and her husband Dexter have been part of the St Mary's for 8 years. All in favour.

Jane and Cathy will be sworn in by the Archdeacon in June.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

4. Number of Parishioners Present and Apologies for Absence

There were 66 present in the church building, and 14 on Zoom, a total of 80 attendees.

Apologies were received from Brian O'Regan, Carole Wadlow, Tony & Janet Drane, Cathy & Chris Howells, Judith Ritchie, Jackie Ryde, Jonathan Wheeler, Fay Williams, Sally Cooper, Alison & Stephen Barrett, Caroline Ashcroft, George Carobene, Susan Bickerstaffe, John Hawkins, Ann Collins, Michael Carmody, Brenda and Paul Davis, Sonja Clements, Dom and Vicky Birkby.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on Sunday 21st May 2023

The minutes were accepted on a show of hands (proposed: Clive Ashcroft, seconded: Gillian Verrall). 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 8 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. in particular, Joyce Tearall, who served for many years.

8. Annual Report for 2023

The Rector thanked everyone who had prepared a report and how wonderful it was to read about what God has been doing in Denham. He thanked all who volunteered and worked in the church, without whom there would be no mission or ministry of Denham Parish Church. Particular thanks were expressed to:

- Unsung heroes who give lifts to people so that they can attend church
- Choir who are committed each week under the guidance of Stephen Armstrong
- John Breese for the many hours in tending the churchyard roses
- Jo Potter and the whole tech team for the online streaming service
- The refreshment team, especially Heather O'Regan who co-ordinates the refreshments
- Flower arrangers
- Jenny Browne for her help in the office, magazine and help with Little Lions
- Pam Montgomery who helped and shaped the bereavement service until last year
- Wendy Jefferies activity manager at White Plains care home
- Craig and Caroline who head up Give and Share for their commitment to help people in our parish and beyond
- Ministry Team for the steady work week in and week out
- Edda Lindner who is engaged so fully and joyfully in the church
- Robert Ash is stepping down, after many years, as the Chair of the Fabric Team. He will remain on the team and Dexter Brown will become Chair. The congregation gave a warm welcome to Dexter.
- Thanks were given to Victoria who stepped down from her role as Church secretary.

9. Financial Report

Mike Stewart, our Treasurer, sent his apologies due to his wife Ann having suffered a stroke while on holiday in Australia. The Rector asked all to continue to pray for Ann and Mike.

We received some very generous donations for the fabric fund which will allow us to do significant work at St Mary's and St Mark's. We also received legacy donations, The Rector encouraged church members to consider leaving a gift for Denham Parish Church in their will. He gave thanks to all who are a regular givers via the Parish Giving Scheme and encouraged everyone to be part of the giving community.

We ended the year with a deficit of almost £20k, after a budgeted deficit of £14k. The general fund is not sustainable with the current trend. The Rector explained the regular giving in 2023 with the help of the giving pyramid provided. We give as we can and not as we can't. We understand if you need to reduce your giving but encourage those who can to

support the work of our church financially. The Rector does not know who gives and how much. We are delighted that Alex Ellison has become our bookkeeper. Any questions about the financial report should be submitted in writing due to Mike's absence, who will respond.

The accounts and financial report were accepted (proposed: Dexter Brown, seconded: Janet Allen). Vast majority in favour.

A budget for 2024 was given to all in advance.

Budget proposed: Jane Brown seconded: Janet Allen. All in agreement to adopt the budget.

10. Churchwardens' Report

The Rector commended this summary of the year.

11. Deanery Synod Report

The Rector thanked Michael Carmody 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 not come to the end of their three-year term. No further candidate has been proposed and there remains one vacancy.

13. Election of PCC Members

We have a total of 12 places for elected members on PCC, there were 6 vacancies.

Dom Birkby decided not to stand again. Thanks were given to Dom.

The Rector gave thanks to all on PCC for their commitment.

Four people were re-elected. Mike Stewart, Kathleen Anderson, Chris Macqueen and Dexter Brown.

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: Edda Lindner, seconded: Sam Carter).

15. A.O.B.

There was no other business.

16. 2024 and Beyond

We are getting ready for the first **Village Fayre** since 2019, Cathy Macqueen and Victoria Lucas are on the committee for the Fayre.

The PCC approved **installation of a new audiovisual system in St Mary's** and hope it will be installed before Advent this year. The church office has a folder with all the details, for those who would like to find out more.

At St Mark's we are drawing up plans to re-order the entrance hall and introduce a toilet for the disabled. Kevin Townsend has agreed to take on the project management of the improvements at St Mark's.

Living in love and faith – We are deeply divided over the question of same-sex marriage, not just in the Church of England but in churches across the world. Recently the General Synod of the CofE has approved prayers of love and faith, which offer a blessing for same-sex couples as part of an existing regular service and not as a stand-alone event. Every incumbent has the right to decide whether he or she will use these prayers. The incumbent's decision is also binding for other ordained ministers in the parish or for visiting clergy. Denham Parish will not be offering Prayers of Love and Faith.

Sabbatical – Christoph and Edda will go on Sabbatical for three months. A Church of England minister can go on sabbatical every 10 years. Christoph has been ordained for 12 years. They will travel and stay for two months with family in Germany. Edda asked for prayers while they are on sabbatical.

The churchwardens will be leading the church in Christoph's absence. Azita and Nnamdi will be working closely together in all matters. Martin Williams and Ian Jennings will be coming once a month to lead and preach and support the team. Sam Carter will continue to support Cathy and Jane during the sabbatical.

Ministry for families – Bishop Steven has asked all parishes to concentrate on the area of families in church. There are already many ways in which we engage with children, young people, families and schools and we have plans and new ideas for the future.

We have doubled our budget for family ministry this year and have adopted **Care for the Family** as one of our mission partners. Kathy Paine gave an introduction on Care for the Family. One member of their team will be our guest speaker soon.

There will be a **holiday club at St Mark's** during the summer holidays. It will be for three days at the end of August 9.30-3pm. Azita will be leading this and has asked for volunteers to sign up.

Sam gave thanks for all the work and dedication that Christoph has given to the church. She wished him and Edda a good and restful sabbatical.

17. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed with the "Leading your Church into Growth" prayer and a blessing.

Next APCM (provisional date): Sunday 11 May 2025, 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 2024**

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 2024:

Incumbent: Christoph Lindner, the chairman

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

Elected members of the PCC were Janet Allen, Kathleen Anderson, 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.

From the APCM 2024:

Incumbent: Christoph Lindner, the chairman

The Churchwardens: Cathy Macqueen (vice-chair) Jane Brown.

Elected members of the PCC were Janet Allen, Kathleen Anderson, Dexter Brown, Michele Lee, Christopher Macqueen, Kathy Paine, Charlotte Hearnden-Smith, Kathryn Sole, Mike Stewart, Sandy Wickenden. Sandy resigned from the PCC in October 2024, creating a casual vacancy.

The representatives on the Deanery Synod were Michael Carmody and Brian O'Regan. The treasurer was Mike Stewart. The Secretary was Victoria Lucas until May. Siân Reading was our interim secretary until October. Our new Parish Administrator Sarah-Jane Bennett started in December.

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 and Mike Stewart.

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

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.

St Mark's Hall Refurbishment Project Team is chaired by Mike Stewart.

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.

The average attendance at St Mary's in October 2024 was **65 adults in the building and 22 screens** (totalling 87) **and 8 children**. The figure for adults in the building is slightly down on 2023 (69 adults), and considerably down for children (14 children in 2023), while there was a small increase in the number of people joining us online (20 screens in 2023).

In 2024 around 530 adults (2023: 550) and around 120 children (2023: 125) came to our Carol and Christmas services at St Mary's. We decided to merge the Crib Service with the Christingle Service, which was very well attended with 51 children present, the highest number of children at carol or Christmas services going back to and including 2019.

In addition to the services at St Mary's, we held an "Advent Film Night" for the first time, "Carols at Café Church" at St Mark's, as well as "Carols and Readings for Christmas" at Denham Garden Village. Our choir led or supported carol singing events in both care homes, at the Memory Café at St Mark's and at Smith's Garden Centre.

Occasional Offices



In 2024 we had 21 baptisms, 5 weddings, as well as one renewal of marriage vows, 13 funerals and 17 burials of ashes.

(Above: Baptism of Millie Birkby)

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 Church Electoral Roll has been renewed; under the six years rule a new application form has been completed for all members included on the roll as required by the diocesan synod and is available for viewing at this meeting. The roll will also be displayed on the notice boards of St Mary's, St Francis and St Mark's.

Whilst there was the expectation that not all members would renew their membership due to bereavement, illness and relocation etc., which materialised, membership remains strong with the inclusion of fifteen first-time applicants. The number of names entered upon the Church Electoral Roll of the parish is one hundred and thirty-six (136).

Parishioners who are listed on the roll are entitled to vote at this meeting. However, in order to qualify for nomination to the Parochial Church Council (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 Parish Church.

New applications may be submitted after the closure of this meeting for inclusion on the next roll. Application Forms are available from the Electoral Officer or at St Mary's from the display area near the entrance of the church or from the Church Administrator's 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 church buildings after this meeting. The electoral roll (ER) number must be confirmed to the diocese by 1 July 2025.

Maurice W Litchmore, Electoral Roll Officer, 11 May 2025

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2024

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.

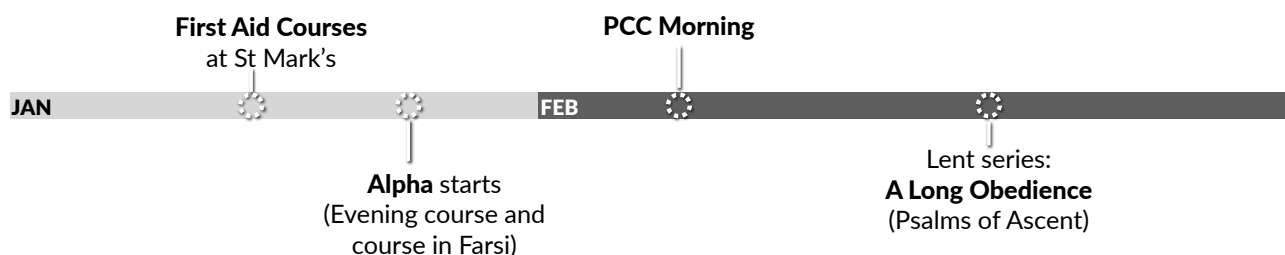
We welcome like Jesus. We have experienced God's welcome in Jesus and want to be a welcoming community for everyone.

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 2024. In addition, there was a PCC Morning in February at St Mark's.

Our Standing Committee (Cockpit Crew) met eight times.



RECTOR'S REVIEW OF 2024

ALL-MEMBER MINISTRY

► “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”
1 Corinthians 12:27

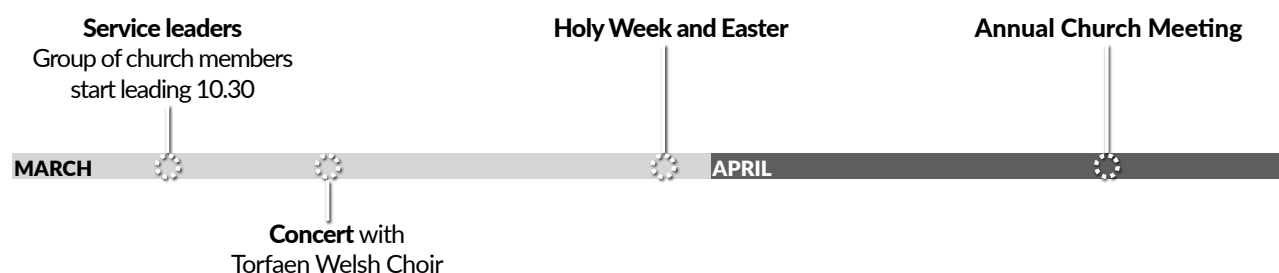
Edda and I had the privilege of taking a three-month sabbatical in 2024 - from mid-May to mid-August. When we came back we were delighted to find the church in good spirits and doing well. This was as much a gift as was our time away.

It has often been said that the church is not the building, but the community that shares life, worships together and participates in mission and ministry. This doesn't denigrate the value of church buildings, which are a vital resource for the life and mission of the church, but without a viable community many churches close their doors every year in our country.

So it is a blessing and cause for thanksgiving that in 2024 many members sustained the life of our church through the giving of their time, their talents, their prayers and financial support. Thank you to every one of you!

During the sabbatical we had a excellent team of three (!) churchwardens leading the church: Cathy Macqueen, our outgoing churchwarden Samantha Carter and the newly elected churchwarden Jane Brown. They worked together with our training curate Azita Jabbari, our associate minister Nnamdi Maduka, and our PCC. Additional support was given by Ian Jennings (formerly associate minister here in Denham) and Martin Williams (a retired minister and friend of St Mary's) who each helped out once a month on a Sunday.

Our ministry team saw significant changes: After many years as our parish secretary we said thank you to Victoria Lucas for leading this important ministry with such ability and dedication. Siân Reading then acted as our unpaid interim secretary with high levels of commitment, giving generously of



her time. In December, our new parish administrator Sarah-Jane Bennett joined the team. God has shown his faithfulness once again.

Nnamdi Maduka and his family were a vital part of our church since early 2019, when he started as associate minister (House for Duty). In the summer he was appointed as vicar of Waltham St Lawrence and Shottesbrooke. We thanked the Madukas at their last service in September. A group of us were able to attend his licensing service in October to support and pray for them as they start a new season of ministry.

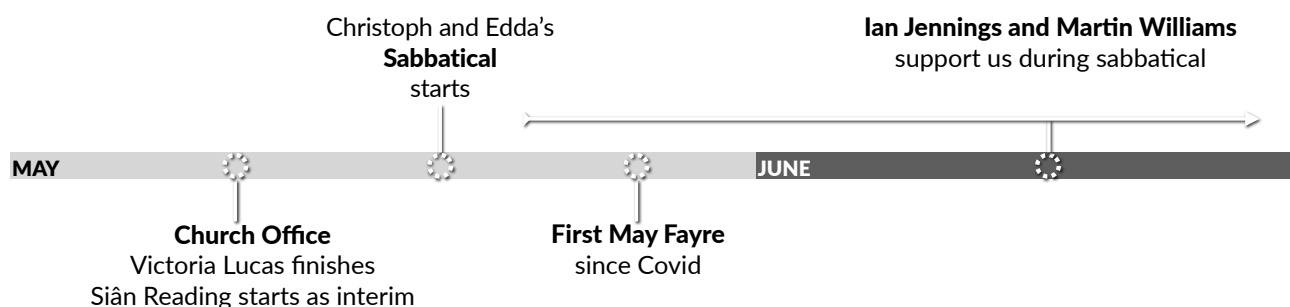
Azita continued to grow in her ministry as she entered the third year of her curacy. She applied for and was offered the role of vicar of St Francis Terriers in High Wycombe at the end of the year and will finish her curacy in Denham after Easter.

Early in the year a group of church members started co-leading our 10.30 service, which continued during and after the sabbatical. It has enriched our services and models something healthy: that each member of the body of Christ has a valuable contribution to make.

There are so many examples and stories of how church members are 'living stones' in the building of Christ's church - please read the individual reports in this booklet, as well as the churchwardens' report, which gives you a good overview of our activities in 2024.

Over the course of four months we invited members of our church to take part in the "Listening Exercise", an open conversation about their experience of church and how they grow as followers of Jesus. A big thank you to Sandy Wickenden and Chris Macqueen who led the project; please read a summary in the individual reports.

In February we received the sad news of the unexpected death of Bishop Alan Wilson, who was just one year shy of retirement as Bishop of Buckingham. In 2024 we also had to say good-bye to several members of our community. Their faithfulness and service of God spurs us on and we treasure them and their contribution to the life of our church.





(Above: A map of our church family.)

ALL NATIONS

► “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” *Jesus in Acts 1.8*

As a local church we are part of the world-wide body of Christ. The church is so much bigger than Denham and we are connected with it in many ways. Nnamdi and Azita come from countries where Christians often have to fear for their lives and they need our prayers and support.

Lighthouse Holiday Club
at St Mark's

JULY

AUG



In January we ran three different Alpha courses: one 'in the room', one on Zoom and one specifically for Farsi speakers. Several participants in the latter were baptised at a service in early May and we said "Kosh Amadid" (Welcome) to them. Later in the year, our small groups took part in the "Joining the Family" course, highlighting how new believers from different religious background especially need to know that they have a new family in the church community.

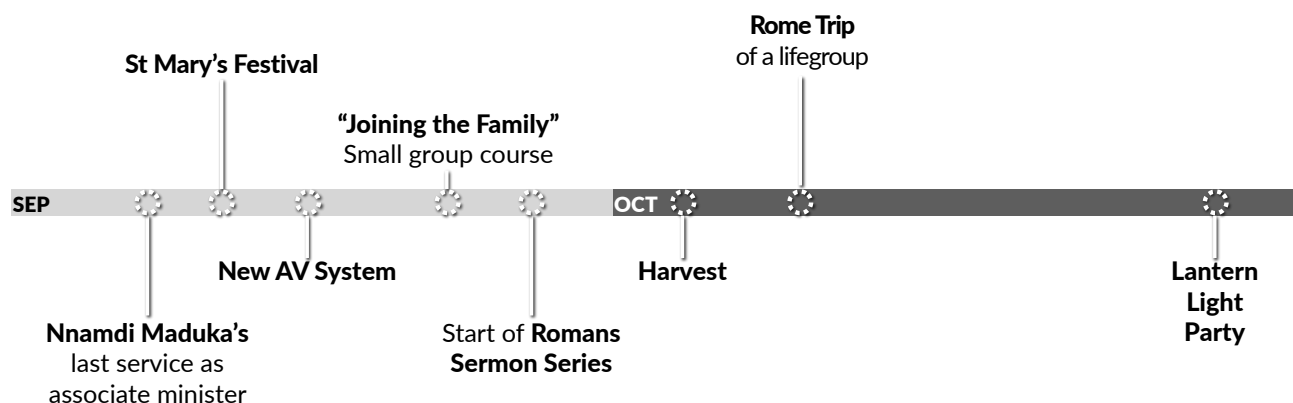
We are also connected with what God is doing around the world through our five mission partners. In 2024 we adopted Care for the Family as a new mission partner. We welcomed Care for the Family and Wycliffe Bible Translators speakers to our services. Samuel Kpagheri (Wycliffe Togo) was granted a visa at the end of the year and we look forward to his visit in February.

The New Testament letters of St Paul bear witness to his calling to take the good news of Jesus to all nations and a small group from our church, together with a few members of other churches walked in his footsteps in October: In the previous autumn our church had studied Paul's letter to the Romans and we learnt so much about Paul's life and message during the study trip.

ALL AGES

► "Young men and women, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord". *Psalms 148.12-13*

Our community ranges from new-born babies to centenarians: In 2024 two church members were 100 or older! In baptisms at our 10.30 services and some stand-alone services we welcomed babies and children into the family of the church.



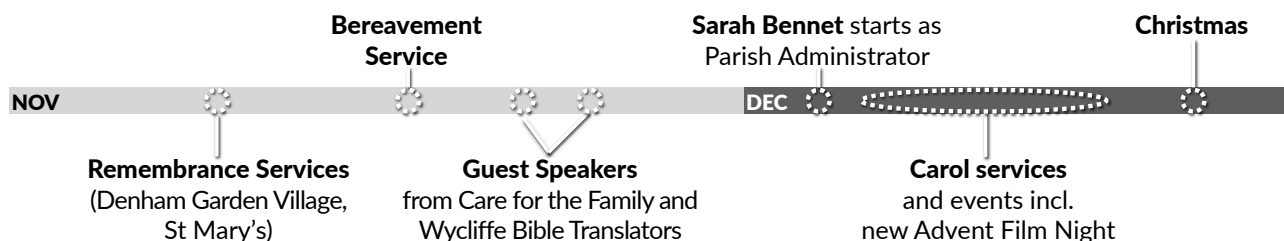
In August we ran our first ever Lighthouse holiday club at St Mark's and welcomed not only children from church families but from the wider community in Denham and beyond.

Our vision is to be an intergenerational church, which is reflected in the format of our 10.30 service; there is also a range of groups that cater for specific ages or needs - from our toddler group Little Lions, Sunday Club and Destiny youth to Café Church and our bereavement group The Haven.



Our special services through the year attract a great range of ages - whether Mothering Sunday, Easter, Remembrance or Christmas. Sadly, we had to do without Joey the donkey at our Palm Sunday procession as he passed away shortly before that weekend.

In September we installed a new AV system at St Mary's - in an increasingly visual culture we want to continue to communicate well with all ages and after some weeks with teething issues the system is operating very well. We continue to stream 10.30 live on Youtube, which allows housebound people to worship with us.



ALL WELCOME

► “Practise hospitality.” *Romans 12.13*

As a parish church we had various opportunities to serve our community beyond the regular events. In January we continued to offer free First Aid classes at St Mark’s, which included training on the new AED defibrillator at St Mark’s House. Many local residents came and found the training relevant and helpful.

Music has the power to connect people - two examples were the concert of the Torfaen Welsh Choir in March and the Alumni concert at the St Mary’s Festival in September.

In May, the Denham Village Fayre returned for the first time after Covid. A new Fayre committee worked very hard to make it happen and the day was a resounding success.



(St Mary’s Churchyard at the Fayre.)

The Holiday Club provided a welcome breather for many parents at the end of the summer holidays.

In 2024, our plans to renovate and extend St Mark’s gathered momentum. Our vision is for St Mark’s to be a community hub that will be used by church and community groups alike. Expect significant progress in 2025!

ALL FOR JESUS

► “All thing have been created through him [Jesus] and for him.”
Colossians 1.1

The raison d'être of the church can be summed up in one word: Jesus. Without him there would be no church; we embody his presence and message; without his Spirit we cannot do his work. In our activities and plans we need to always ask: Does this commend Jesus?

During our sabbatical, three priorities emerged for me as I contemplated the next season of our church' life:

1. Grow deep roots in the love of Christ.
2. Train and commission missionary disciples
3. An intergenerational church focusing on families and young people.

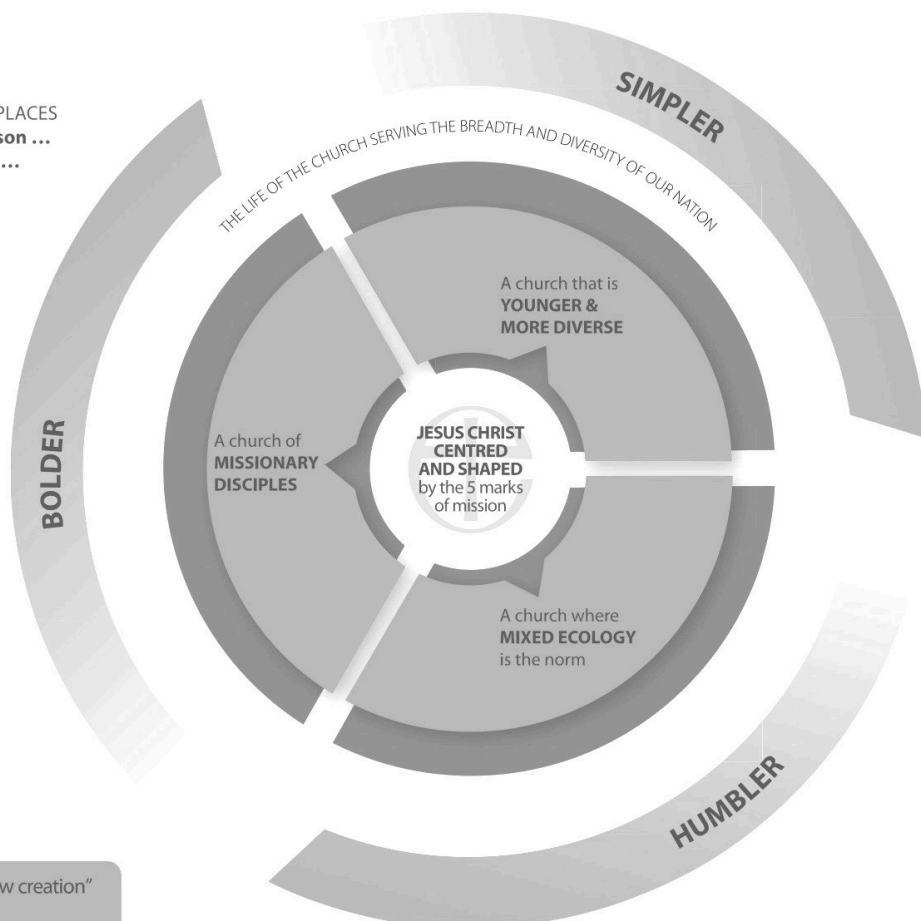
This resonates with the Church of England's 2020 vision of being a Christ-centred, younger, missionary church (see image below).

Thank you for being a part of this community!

(Rev'd Christoph Lindner, Rector)

A VISION FOR THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE 2020s

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES
... a Christian vision for every person ...
... a Christian vision for the world ...



"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation"
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2024

The PCC had a productive away day in February focusing on families, children and youth.



We hosted a Welsh male voice choir on 8th March for St David's Day (*see photo above*) which was closely followed by Mothering Sunday during which the St Mary's Kids Choir beautifully sang "Count your blessings" and all the ladies were given a posy of daffodils.

Sadly, this Easter Joey the donkey was unable to lead the Palm Sunday procession but many of the congregation met at the Village Hall and we all had fronds and streamers as we processed to St Mary's.

At the APCM we said thank you to three key people who have stepped back but so faithfully served St Mary's for many years - Robert Ash (Fabric Team Lead, succeeded by Dexter Brown); Victoria Lucas (Parish Secretary, succeeded by Sarah Bennett later in the year); Samantha Carter (churchwarden) succeeded by Jane Brown who along with Cathy Macqueen, was elected as churchwarden.

On 15 May, Christoph and Edda departed for a very well-deserved Sabbatical. With a newly vacant Parish secretary position it was a steep learning curve for Cathy, Jane and Azita who were all very grateful that Samantha continued to provide wisdom and support during this period. We worked well as a team and kept St Mary's alive and busy, whilst Christoph and Edda had a much-needed rest.

The relaunch of Denham Village Fayre was a great success and it was lovely to see lots of the congregation using their gifts in so many ways to serve our local community, thank you. There was a real buzz around the church and the churchyard. Jane and Dexter hosted a delicious BBQ a few weeks later to thank all those that helped.

In June, we had our official churchwardens 'swearing in' service at All Saints Church in High Wycombe and Azita came to support us. We completed the annual inventory of church valuables and everything was in order. Lawrence Tebboth, Lay Deanery Chair attended for our church Visitation Inspection which we passed with flying colours!

End of August saw a great team, led by Azita, hosting our first Lighthouse holiday club where 32 enthusiastic primary school children learnt about Peter in a very engaging and fun way. It drew in a significant number of non-church families which was a very encouraging.

In September, Nnamdi was appointed as Vicar of Waltham St Lawrence and Shottesbrooke. We thank the whole Maduka family (Chinwendu, Kelechi, Amarachi, Ebubechi and Udochukwu) for so cheerfully serving and using their many talents at St Mary's - their praise and worship whilst singing was a real treat for us all.

St Mary' Festival was very wet with torrents of rain pouring off the gazebos and people dashing outside with umbrellas to collect their burger or hot dog! Games and activities moved inside the church, and it was lovely to see many families enjoying all the crafts, games and bell ringing opportunities.

In the Autumn, most Lifegroups studied the video series "Joining the family" which focused on the challenges people face when they change faith. This culminated in a delicious bring and share lunch at St Mark's where we had a fusion of Persian and English dishes and enjoyed the opportunity to get to know more members of St Mary's.



As at Easter, Patronal and Christmas, Pam, Brenda, Sue and Michele decorated the church beautifully for Harvest and we had many generous donations of supermarket vouchers which we distributed to local families in need.

We provided refreshments for the PCC Christmas meeting and welcomed Sarah Bennett who even managed to win the 'get to know everyone' game at the start of the evening! Thank you to all those who helped decorate the church and Christmas Tree and in making up the Christingle oranges. All those involved seemed to enjoy themselves whilst helping make the Advent season festive and meaningful for others.

This year we merged the Crib and Christingle services and the church was full of families and excited children as the lights went out and the church was lit by candles and their Christingle oranges. Another first was using the new AV system to host an Advent movie night.

One unusual role of a churchwarden is to step into any void in a service. The last Sunday of 2024 Christoph was very unwell and with Azita and Cathy away, Jane had a last-minute request to step up and lead the 9am service. This had to be changed from Holy Communion to morning prayer and she was very grateful for the gracious support from all those present. The reading and message aptly focused on how we as a church family need to love and care for each other as we all share life and worship together. God has given us all unique and valuable gifts which we should use for the glory of God here in Denham. Thank you for playing your part!

(Jane Brown and Cathy Macqueen)

2024 FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESULTS

The Annual Accounts, which have been reviewed by David Steel FCA, acting as an Independent Examiner, show an increase of £1,579 in the General Fund, an increase £646,764 in the Fabric Fund, a decrease of £887 in the Rector's & Churchwardens' Fund, an increase of £3,809 in the Church Growth Fund and a decrease of £2,623 in the Give & Share Fund.

At 31 December 2024 the General Fund stood at £43,463, the Fabric Fund at £1,014,848, the Rector's and Churchwardens' Fund at £43,526, the Church Growth Fund at £14,754 and the Give & Share Fund at £11,250.

In total there was an increase in the combined Funds of £648,642 so that the total of all the funds stood at £1,127,841 at 31 December 2024 compared to £479,199 at 31 December 2023.

Cash balances at 31 December 2024 totalled £1,155,378 compared with £502,887 at 31 December 2023.

We were most fortunate and most blessed to receive donations of £600,000 into the Fabric Fund during the year which enabled us to claim a further £150,000 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 and church houses require constant maintenance and upkeep, which last year totalled £137,662, as set out in Note 6, which compares with the £41,378 incurred in 2023. As we seek to progress with once in a generation repairs to St Mary's Church and a major improvement to St Mark's Hall we need to keep the Fabric Fund robustly healthy so the incredibly generous donations in this and indeed recent years are particularly welcome.

Following the triumphant success of the Fayre in 2024 it is such good news that it will be held again in 2025. 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 £5,000, gifts that were much appreciated.

Total Incoming Resources in the Unrestricted General Fund were £133,580 compared to £118,625 the previous year. Planned Christian Giving at £65,740 was 11% up on the previous year with Weekly Collections at £7,977 slightly down on the previous year. We do of course enormously appreciate the fantastic donations into our Fabric Fund but it is this amazing Planned Christian Giving that enables our local Church to keep spreading the word of Jesus Christ – so thank you all so very much.

Apart from the increase in Planned Christian Giving the largest increase in income to the General Fund were from Weddings and Funerals at £12,275 compared with £9,190 the previous year and interest on investments which totalled £11,788 compared to £4,064 last year.

The rental income received from St Mark's Church Hall is shown at £8,390 with the expenditure at £4,517.

Total Costs in the General Fund reduced to £132,001 from £137,867 the previous year. The main reason for this was the reduction in Secretarial costs, where the wonderful Sian Reading held the fort for us after Victoria left and before Sarah joined. Thank you so much Sian! Once again as in previous years steps were taken to trim back on discretionary expenditure where possible without damaging the activities of the Church, the contribution that everyone has made to this is most appreciated.

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 2025 assumes a small loss so we expect the General Fund to remain ahead of this important yardstick.

In view of our financial position charitable donations for the year have increased 16% from last year to a total of £23,378.

Can I particularly draw your attention to the Give & Share Team whose donations to those in need in our Parish totalled £11,718 compared to £9,597 last year. Details of this expenditure are given in Note 7. A number of people help with Give and Share but without doubt the driving forces are Craig Alexander and Caroline Goodwin and it is only right that their incredible Christian commitment to this charitable work, and all it stands for in our community, should be applauded and recognised. Thank you Craig and thank you Caroline!

You may notice for the first time payments to charities of £3,000 were made from the Fabric Fund. These are payments made at the request of the Fayre Committee as we agreed that 20% of the Fayre profits should go to local charities nominated by them. This process has worked really well this year and I hope it continues into the future.

Expenditure from the Fabric Fund increased in the year, the new AV system and the refurbishment of St Francis House being the main items of expenditure. Full details are given in Notes 6 and 8.

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 Churchwardens' Fund that stood at £43,526 at the year end has begun to benefit from the higher rates of interest now payable to deposited funds.

The Church Growth Fund stood at £14,754 at the year end and is ring-fenced to support appropriate expenditure for new growth activities as and when required.

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 2024 and through the coming year.

(Mike Stewart, PCC Treasurer)

Correspondence Address for the PCC:

St Mary's Church Office

Village Road, Denham, UB9 5BH

Extracted from the Annual Report of the PCC for the Year Ended 31st December 2024
The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Denham
Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

| | General Fund (Unrestricted) | | Fabric Fund (Designated) | | Rectors & Churchwardens Fund (Restricted) | | Church Growth Fund (Restricted) | | Give & Share Fund (Restricted) | | Consolidation Adjustment | | Total Funds | |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Note | 2024 £ | 2023 £ | 2024 £ | 2023 £ | 2024 £ | 2023 £ | 2024 £ | 2023 £ | 2024 £ | 2023 £ | 2024 £ | 2023 £ | 2024 £ | 2023 £ |
| INCOMING RESOURCES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weekly collections | 7,977 | 8,911 | | | | | | | | | | | 7,977 | 8,911 |
| Planned Christian Giving (PCG) | 65,740 | 59,315 | | | | | | | | | | | 65,740 | 59,315 |
| Gift Aid Tax recovered | 15,040 | 15,395 | 150,000 | 25,000 | | | | | | | | | 165,040 | 40,395 |
| Donations & Legacies | 7,507 | 8,300 | 600,000 | 106,000 | - | - | - | - | 9,160 | 9,290 | | | 616,667 | 123,590 |
| Incoming resources from donors | 96,264 | 91,921 | 750,000 | 131,000 | - | - | - | - | 9,160 | 9,290 | | | 855,424 | 232,211 |
| Vestry Teas & Sunday coffees | | - | | | | | | | | | | | - | - |
| Miscellaneous | 4,863 | 3,350 | 1,599 | | | | | | | 745 | | | 6,462 | 4,095 |
| Other voluntary income resources | 4,863 | 3,350 | 1,599 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 745 | | | 6,462 | 4,095 |
| Wedding & Funeral Fees | 12,275 | 9,190 | | | | | | | | | | | 12,275 | 9,190 |
| Denham & Patronal Festival Fairs | | | 18,467 | 2,688 | | | | | | | | | 18,467 | 2,688 |
| St Marks Church - Rental Income | 8,390 | 5,850 | | | | | | | - | - | | | 8,390 | 5,850 |
| Income from Charitable & Ancillary Trading | 20,665 | 15,040 | 18,467 | 2,688 | - | - | - | - | - | - | | | 39,132 | 17,728 |
| Income from Investments - interest | 11,788 | 4,064 | 14,360 | 9,881 | 2,363 | 1,968 | 3,809 | 449 | 2,083 | 628 | | | 34,403 | 16,990 |
| Transfer from Growth Fund | | 4,250 | | | | | | | | | (4,250) | | 0 | - |
| Total Incoming Resources | 133,580 | 118,625 | 784,426 | 143,569 | 2,363 | 1,968 | 3,809 | 449 | 11,243 | 10,663 | 0 | (4,250) | 935,421 | 271,024 |
| RESOURCES EXPENDED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gas & Electricity | 5,059 | 7,877 | | | | | | | | | | | 5,059 | 7,877 |
| St Francis House | 4,302 | 2,021 | | | | | | | | | | | 4,302 | 2,021 |
| St Francis Church | 37 | - | | | | | | | | | | | 37 | - |
| St Marks Church | 2,218 | 4,641 | | | | | | | | | | | 2,218 | 4,641 |
| St Marks House | 4,517 | 4,453 | | | | | | | | | | | 4,517 | 4,453 |
| St Marks Church | 1,459 | 1,699 | | | | | | | | | | | 1,459 | 1,699 |
| Cleaning | 7,083 | 13,920 | | | | | | | | | | | 7,083 | 13,920 |
| Secretarial Expenses | 1,688 | 1,573 | | | | | | | | | | | 1,688 | 1,573 |
| Printing, Post, Books & Stationery | 2,638 | 3,998 | | | | | | | | | | | 2,638 | 3,998 |
| Clergy Administration & Training | 966 | 973 | | | | | | | | | | | 966 | 973 |
| Telephone & Internet Connection | 6,650 | 5,995 | | | | | | | | | | | 6,650 | 5,995 |
| Organist | 67,119 | 66,300 | | | | | | | | | | | 67,119 | 66,300 |
| Parish Share | 1,684 | 709 | | | | | | | | | | | 1,684 | 709 |
| Childrens Ministry | 1,252 | 944 | | | | | | | | | | | 1,252 | 944 |
| Parish Hospitality | 2,578 | 1,711 | | | | | | | | | | | 2,578 | 1,711 |
| Website & IT | 9,653 | 12,101 | | | | | | | | | | | 9,653 | 12,101 |
| Associate Ministers | 5,410 | 4,283 | 3,000 | | 3,250 | 6,250 | | | 11,718 | 9,597 | | | 23,378 | 20,130 |
| Donations to Charities | 7,688 | 4,669 | | | | 222 | | | | | | | 7,688 | 4,891 |
| Miscellaneous | | | 134,662 | 41,378 | | | | | 2,148 | 1,850 | | | 134,662 | 41,378 |
| Fabric Fund Expenditure | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2,148 | 1,850 |
| Give & Share Fund | | | | | | | | | | | | | - | - |
| Church Growth Fund Expenditure | | | | | | | | 4,250 | | | | (4,250) | - | - |
| Transfer to General Fund | | | | | | | | | | | | | - | - |
| Total Resources Expended | 132,001 | 137,867 | 137,662 | 41,378 | 3,250 | 6,472 | - | 4,250 | 13,866 | 11,447 | - | (4,250) | 286,779 | 197,164 |

Extracted from the Annual Report of the PCC for the Year Ended 31st December 2024

The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Denham

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Independent Examiner's Statement

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.

Date : 17/02/2025

David Steel FCA

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin Denham

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2024

| | 2024 | 2023 |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| | £ | £ |
| Current Assets | | |
| Short term deposits | 1,118,034 | 489,284 |
| Bank current account | 37,344 | 13,603 |
| | <hr/> 1,155,378 | <hr/> 502,887 |
| Current Liabilities | | |
| Creditors and accruals | (27,537) | (28,787) |
| Other Debtors | 0 | 5,099 |
| | <hr/> £ 1,127,841 | <hr/> £ 479,199 |
| Net Assets | | |
| Funds | | |
| General Fund (unrestricted) | 43,463 | 41,884 |
| Fabric Fund (designated) | 1,014,848 | 368,084 |
| Rectors & Churchwardens Discretionary Fund (restricted) | 43,526 | 44,413 |
| Church Growth Fund (restricted) | 14,754 | 10,945 |
| Give & Share (restricted) | 11,250 | 13,873 |
| | <hr/> £ 1,127,841 | <hr/> £ 479,199 |

**Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 4 February 2025 and signed on their behalf by
Rev. Christoph Lindner (Rector) and Mrs Cathy MacQueen and Mrs Jane Brown (Church Wardens)**

(The original document is signed)

Rev C Lindner

Mrs C MacQueen

Mrs J Brown

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 and 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 Rector and Churchwarden's Fund is a Restricted Fund for the benefit Charity and for the growth of the Christian message in this Country and overseas as deemed appropriate by the PCC.

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.

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin - Denham
Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

| | 2024 | 2023 | | 2024 | 2023 |
|--|--------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| | £ | £ | | £ | £ |
| 1 St Francis House | | | 6 Fabric Fund | | |
| Insurance | 744 | 663 | Audio Visual System | 41,160 | |
| Plumbing | 2,016 | 710 | St Francis House - Refurb | 30,767 | |
| Alarm | - | 108 | Tree & Churchyard Maintenance | 12,360 | |
| Other Maintenance | 1,092 | 90 | Drainage Soakaway | 9,114 | |
| Fees | 450 | 450 | St Marks Hall - Gutter & Soffits | 6,850 | |
| | 4,302 | 2,021 | Tower Repairs | 2,806 | |
| | | | St Marks House - Windows | 2,400 | |
| 2 St Marks House | | | St Marks Hall - Fees | 2,118 | |
| Insurance | 805 | 788 | Other | 2,699 | 698 |
| Alarm Service | 119 | 108 | Professional Fees | 2,735 | 816 |
| Painting, Decorating & Electrical | - | 278 | Computer | 1,500 | |
| Plumbing & Heating Repairs | 654 | 2,010 | Heart Defibrillator | 450 | 1,699 |
| Other Maintenance | 190 | 316 | Pew Cushions | | 3,516 |
| New Oven | | 841 | Chancel Roof | | 3,014 |
| Fees | 450 | 300 | Churchyard East Gateway | | 8,148 |
| | 2,218 | 4,641 | Vestry Toilet | | 1,680 |
| | | | | | |
| 3 St Marks Church | | | Charitable Donations | 3,000 | |
| Utilities | 2,224 | 2,545 | | | |
| Cleaning & Maintenance | 1,590 | 1,223 | Insurance | 5,345 | 4,824 |
| Insurance | 540 | 525 | Churchyard | 7,102 | 6,583 |
| Other | 163 | 160 | Maintenance (See Note 8) | 7,256 | 8,645 |
| | 4,517 | 4,453 | | 137,662 | 39,623 |
| | | | | | |
| 4 Associate Ministers | | | 7 Give & Share Fund | | |
| Rent | - | 3,800 | Christmas Programme | 10,876 | 7,887 |
| Utilities | 2,781 | 2,303 | Urgent Support Payments | 680 | 1,460 |
| Council Tax | 6,872 | 5,998 | Harvest Festival Vouchers | 162 | 250 |
| | 9,653 | 12,101 | Storage | 1,800 | 1,800 |
| | | | Admin | 348 | 50 |
| | | | | 13,866 | 11,447 |
| 5 Charitable Donations | | | | | |
| <i>From General and Rectors & CW Funds</i> | | | 8 Maintenance | | |
| Tearfund | 2,050 | 2,900 | Waste Collection | 2,205 | 2,085 |
| Care for the Family | 2,050 | 1,250 | Security | 1,209 | 1,999 |
| Trinity / SHOC | 1,300 | 2,250 | Fire Extinguishers | 248 | 232 |
| Wycliffe Bible Translations | 1,300 | 1,250 | Clock Annual Maintenance | 266 | 266 |
| Bible Reading Fellowship | 1,300 | 1,250 | Mowing Equipment Repairs | 500 | 876 |
| Other Charities | | | Heating Maintenance | 1,010 | 1,897 |
| Church Army | - | 1,250 | Electrical Repairs & PAT Testing | 168 | 597 |
| Royal British Legion | 360 | 250 | Organ Tuning | 690 | - |
| Childrens Society | 300 | 133 | Miscellaneous | 961 | 693 |
| | 8,660 | 10,533 | | 7,257 | 8,645 |

REPORTS FROM OUR GROUPS AND MINISTRIES: FROM A TO Z

ALPHA

From January we ran three different Alpha courses - one on Monday evenings at the Rectory with eight guests, one on Tuesday evenings led Azita and Kamran in their home, with six guests (this one was held in Farsi), and an online course on Zoom, led by Nnamdi and Chinwendu Maduka on Wednesday evenings with seven participants. Five members of the Farsi Alpha group were baptised in May.

Edda and Christoph hosted an Alpha social in the Rectory garden in August and several people brought family members (*see photo below*). It was a happy occasion showing the friendships that were built during the course.



Alpha continues to be a very effective way to introduce people to the Christian faith irrespective of their background. If you'd like to take part in 2026, please send a message to the office so that we can let you know more information in due course. While we have had a few people signing up via the national Alpha website, the vast majority of guests come

because they have been invited by a friend. Whom could you invite to Alpha next year?

Here are some of the comments from attendees:

- ▶ "The Alpha experience exceeded all my expectations. I feel more connected with Jesus and that my faith has been re-affirmed. I feel more confident and comfortable to be open and honest that I am a Christian with friends."
- ▶ "This was an amazing experience. I feel at peace."
- ▶ "Very thoughtful leading – so encouraging and enabling. I loved the videos."

BELLRINGERS

After a couple of unusual years with ringing to mark the change of monarch, this year was rather more low key. On a personal level it was rather dominated by my cancer treatment, so I must start by thanking the other ringers and the wider church for the support I received.

Ringling for services generally continues about once a month to make sure we can assemble a full band, and we managed a limited amount of extra ringing over

Christmas and on New Year's Eve. We also rang to say farewell to the Madukas. We have continued using the Ellacombe chimes on other Sundays and for a number of weddings and funerals. We have been pleased to welcome a couple of visiting bands to ring our well-regarded bells.



(Above: Wedding at St Mary's.)

We have again not needed any significant repairs this year so our finances are still in good shape topped up by fees from weddings and funerals, with enough in reserve to cover occasional expenses such as a broken stay or a replacement rope.

It makes all the difference to the sound when we have enough to ring all 8 bells and we do have space for a keen learner or three; it needs a bit of time to learn plus the ability to count up to 8, reasonable co-ordination and fitness, but no great strength. Having lost the help of the Maduka family, we would also love to add to the rota for the chimes, which can be picked up in a single session; adults are welcome but also maybe something that might interest a 10+ age child to do with a parent once a month, or as a Duke of Edinburgh's Award activity. Anyone who might be interested is welcome to contact me to find out more.

(Andrew Simpson, Tower Captain, March 2025)

andrew@simpson.trumail.com (01895) 255594

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Individual reports below on:

- ▶ Destiny Youth Group
- ▶ Lighthouse Holiday Club
- ▶ Little Lions Toddler Group
- ▶ School Assemblies
- ▶ Sunday Club and Kids' Choir

DESTINY

Destiny (youth aged 10 and above) has undergone multiple exciting changes this year which we hope will continue to bring new life to the group. The first major change has been in the leadership, with Tim Macqueen and Charlotte Hearnden-Smith stepping up to run the group and Azita Jabbari and Jane Brown stepping back to fill a supporting role. Secondly, the meeting time has moved to 5pm to 7pm on the second Sunday of the month. Finally, the style of the sessions has changed, shifting to a community focus and emphasising the creation of a group of friends, alongside good biblical teaching.

Making a comfortable and welcoming environment for the Destiny members has been important - we have invested in some new beanbags, used softer lighting in the smaller room at St Mark's, played fun games and created a more casual session style. We have seen encouraging growth in the bonds between the Destiny members and hope to see them continue to develop stronger friendships and potentially bring other friends into the group. We have a regular core of 6 youth each session.

We began the first few new Destiny style sessions with a focus on games and building up the group and then began our first project, the Destiny Christmas video. The theme of this was 'connecting the dots', with every Destiny member voicing a character from the Christmas story and the film then premiered to great success during the Christmas Day service. We then began the 'Just 10' series on the ten commandments and will continue to follow this throughout 2025, interspaced with special events. Our first special event was a 'Passover dinner' which involved hand-making unleavened bread, a quiz on special foods around the world and a roast lamb dinner. While we ate dinner the original story of the Passover event in Egypt was explained and then linked to Jesus at the last supper and the reasons why we have Communion.

We look forward to the future and the continued support from the church, families and most importantly the Destiny members.

(Tim Macqueen)

LIGHTHOUSE HOLIDAY CLUB

Introduction

The Lighthouse Holiday Club took place last summer, providing 32 children with a fun, engaging, and spiritually enriching experience during the school holidays. The program offered a mix of Bible teaching, worship, crafts, games, and community-building activities in a safe and welcoming environment.

Objectives

- To introduce children to the Christian faith through interactive and engaging activities.
- To provide a safe and enjoyable space for children during the holidays.
- To foster community connections between the church, volunteers, and families.
- To encourage teamwork, creativity, and personal growth in a faith-based setting.

Structure & Activities

The Lighthouse Holiday Club ran for three days and was open to children of various age groups.

The daily schedule included:

- **Worship & Bible Stories:** Engaging storytelling, songs, and interactive discussions to teach Biblical principles.
- **Crafts & Creative Activities:** Hands-on projects that reinforced the day's lesson in a fun and artistic way.
- **Games & Outdoor Activities:** Physical and team-building activities that encouraged social interaction and cooperation.
- **Small Group Discussions:** Time for children to reflect, share their thoughts, and ask questions in a supportive setting.
- **Prayer & Reflection:** Encouraging children to explore faith in a personal and meaningful way.

Impact & Feedback

The Lighthouse Holiday Club was a great success, receiving positive feedback from parents, children, and volunteers. Many families appreciated the structured and caring environment, and children enjoyed the mix of learning and fun. Volunteers found the experience rewarding, as it provided opportunities to mentor and support young participants in their faith journey.

Challenges & Considerations

- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Ensuring sufficient helpers to maintain a safe and effective program.
- **Resource Management:** Securing funding and materials for activities.
- **Engagement & Retention:** Encouraging continued involvement in church activities beyond the holiday club.
- **Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:** Unfortunately, we didn't have the resources to offer the holiday club to children with special needs last year. This remains an important area for improvement and something we need to consider carefully in future planning.

Conclusion & Future Plans

The Lighthouse Holiday Club was a valuable ministry outreach last summer, strengthening community ties and nurturing young faith. We are planning to run it again in 2025. Future plans include expanding outreach efforts, incorporating new activities, enhancing volunteer training, and exploring ways to make the program more inclusive for children with special needs to ensure sustained impact and growth.

(Azita Jabbari)

LITTLE LIONS

We all love being involved with our Little Lions Toddler Group on a Wednesday morning. A group of enthusiastic volunteers welcome mums/carers with their toddlers and provide a safe, exciting and comfortable environment for little ones to explore and for grownups, local to Denham, to connect. We meet for 12 sessions termly.

Each week there is a range of activities fine-tuned to the age groups we have, an interactive Bible Story, songs, nursery rhymes and dancing.



Over the weeks we have an average of twelve families attending and recently have been able to welcome more local families. We also have a group of grannies/grandpas who take over as mums go back to work.

This season we were grateful to receive a donation from the New Denham Community Association and were able to buy two much needed mats for the baby corner, two bubble cars for the outside play area and a set of puzzle mats.

We are a friendly group serving the local community and are always looking for volunteers to join our wonderful team so please talk to Edda or me if you would like to offer a helping hand.

(Kathy Paine)

SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

In 2024 our Assembly team has grown: Sue Richardson and Sian Reading joined the team and Kathy Paine re-joined the team. In both local primary schools we offer two assemblies a month as "Storytellers" with the "Open the Book" programme.

Assemblies happened on Thursdays, each for about 10-12 minutes. We close the assembly with a song. The photo shows the team at its most hilarious! We are always on the lookout for more storytellers, please get in touch if this might be something that you would enjoy.

Both schools came to St Mary's for their Christmas Concerts and Christoph, Azita and myself were so glad to welcome them and provide a special moment for their school communities.

(Edda Lindner)

SUNDAY CLUB AND KIDS' CHOIR

On 45 Sundays a dedicated team has provided Sunday Club in 2024. The average attendance was 8 children with anything from 2 up to 23 children.

The "big event" sessions with highest attendances were Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Baptism Services, end of school year celebration, St Mary's Festival and Remembrance Sunday with Denham Rainbows and Brownies joining in with a special craft activity. We welcomed Sian Reading and Briony Nevitte into the team.

The Kids' Choir @ Sunday Club once a month was consistently introduced this year, usually led by Sian Reading. This has been enriching and helping us prepare special contributions from the children for all-age celebrations.

Apart from the monthly short session at Sunday Club, the **Kids' Choir** met most months on Saturdays for an hour and worked towards special

performances: Mothering Sunday, Easter Family Service and with some extra rehearsals for the Carols for All Ages in December. In the early summer term, we did a short video project.

The Sunday Club register is now entirely done electronically. I want to thank the team of leaders: Kath Sole, Sonja Clements and Kathy Paine, for embracing this change and their continuous, conscientious and prayerful preparation of Sunday Club sessions. I would like to thank the team of helpers too, for their flexibility, love and commitment to Sunday Club: Sarah Leer, Laura Philips, Briony Nevitte, Robert and Eliana Melis.

It's been a personal highlight for me to see how this dedicated team have managed the three months, when I was away on sabbatical. My heartfelt thanks to all the team, but especially to Kath Sole and Kathy Paine for taking the lead. It's been so good to see everyone growing and contributing their gifts.

Here are some of the team, sharing their highlights or why they love being part of the Sunday Club team:

Kath Sole: During Edda and Christoph's sabbatical the team worked hard to keep Sunday Club running every week. We took on the challenge of doing the action songs up the front in Church, something the team has continued since, I think this is a good way to get ready for Sunday Club. My most memorable session was the end of term session on the 21st July, 17 children attended. We did a reminder of some of the bible stories the children had learnt about over the term. I was encouraged how many the children remembered. As the session had a party theme, we decorated the cakes and although I had only planned for 12 children, God provided when one of the families donated some fruit kebabs.

Sian Reading: My Sunday club highlight in 2024 was practising for the children's Christmas service. Watching the children enjoying the fun Christmas warmups and performing the songs to a high standard made my Christmas. I am part of the Sunday Club team because I love teaching children to sing hymns and songs and praise God through the power of music.

Laura Philips: I love to see the children grow in the Lord and being with them reminds me to pray for them constantly that God will protect them from bad influences and help them to mature in the Word and learn how to live by faith in Him.

Sarah Leer: I enjoy helping out at Sunday Club because it is so rewarding to experience the joy of seeing young minds learn about God's word and to help them develop their faith and understanding of the bible. The activities

are fun and engaging and there is always a lively discussion! I am very grateful to be part of such a wonderful church family.

There are two other "Special Events" I would like to highlight:



(Above: Shirley and Carole crocheted many chickens for our Easter Egg Hunt.)

We invited (once again) to an Easter Egg Hunt before the 10.30am Easter Family Service: we had a great team helping to make this possible: The Macqueens and their wider family all helped, Kathy Paine, Brenda Davis, Sophie and Olivia Clements. The church site was buzzing with youngsters and their families and it was wonderful to give everyone a warm welcome.



The Lightparty on the 31st of October - took place at St Mark's this year and was attended by a wider group of families from the community. Once again the team who made this event possible, was outstanding - attentive, welcoming and fun.

CHOIR

The choir of St. Mary's Church, Denham continues to lead and serve the church's music. In 2024 we arranged a choir 'Come and Sing' choral workshop followed by a trip to hear Choral Evensong at St. Albans Cathedral. Having offered lovely music throughout the year and for special seasons, notably Christmas 2024,

illness has prevented a few members from being able to attend church and contribute, but with time and the better weather we have welcomed back the poorly and look forward with joy to the return of others who have been longer-term sick.

Plans are well ahead for the choir's Easter music offerings. Also the choir is spearheading recruitment for a 'Come & Sing' and a performance of Sir John Stainer's CRUCIFIXION on Saturday 12th April, which will be not only an exciting opportunity to learn this Victorian masterpiece but also to give a performance in the church in the afternoon for the wider community to enjoy.

Plans for a choir trip to Cambridge to visit 5 colleges and attend a Choral Evensong are also being finalised.

The church choir remains a happy and vibrant group and wishes to reach out to members of the church community who might like to join the choir for its monthly choir rehearsal on the fourth Thursday evening of each month in addition to short rehearsals after Sunday morning services.

Please contact Stephen Armstrong on stephenarmstrong445@gmail.com if you are interested.

(Stephen Armstrong)

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Deanery synod met three times, the first being at Christ Church, Chesham starting with a memorial tribute to the recently deceased Bishop Alan of Buckingham. It re-elected Laurence Tebboth as Lay Chairman for the coming term but the Vice-Chairman role could not be filled. Other deanery officers were also elected. Following reconfigurations as the Deanery Trust, the accounts were accepted and the budget approved. Then reformed as Synod, the meeting heard from the Parish Development Adviser on his role in assisting in parish appointments on vacancies and other activities. It received a report of the recent General Synod with its emphasis on the need to engage with children, families and schools and enjoyed a small group discussion on local activities in our parishes.

The next meeting at Chesham Bois in June could not be attended by our representatives due to holiday or other commitments. It dealt with nominations to Deanery Synod, but two lay places remain unfilled. The principal item was how the deanery was dealing with the Synod item referred to at the last meeting (see above) and some individual reports on school involvement were received.

A proposed September meeting was cancelled and held in November at St James Gerrards Cross. This was very much a business meeting dealing with finances and Budget with resultant Parish Share issues. It received a report on recent

proceedings in general synod with its emphasis on the issue of same sex blessings and had given permission for a form of service to be trialled where Parishes had requested. It was followed by an interesting film report on the extending activities of the Deanery-supported Mission in Honduras. The meeting closed on a personal reflection on the role of music in services leading to a small group discussion which revealed a wide range of opinions.

(Michael Carmody)

DENHAM PARISH NEWS

Denham Parish News (DPN) continues to be issued once a quarter (December, March, June, September) as a 32-page printed colour edition, with an online version available on the Church website (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 kept the magazine price at £1.50 per issue (discounted to £5 p.a for regular subscribers) but slightly increased the advertiser fees. We see DPN as an arm of outreach and routinely over-print so that we can give away complimentary copies.

We continue to include a varied content of clear Christian messaging with our 'Life and Faith' series, interviewing Ian and Susan Bickerstaff, Paul Davis and Dominic Grieve. The Bible Detective explored 'What does the Bible say about families' and 'Artificial Intelligence'. With book reviews, photo montages of key events, visually guided seasonal articles and craft activities, interesting historical pieces, poems, stories and reflections on creation care, trips to Rome and 'where is your happy place', hopefully there is something for everyone to enjoy! Please pick up a copy or apply for an annual subscription!

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 to everyone who has contributed their time and talent this year, and to everyone who continues to read it! Denham Parish News is very much a team effort.

(Cathy Macqueen, Editor)

DENHAM VILLAGE FAYRE

After the 4-year hiatus due to the Covid pandemic and with a completely new committee (Chair: Amy Kenworthy) it was wonderful to see thousands of people attend this wonderful community event. Activities included a children's art competition, a giant marble run, Punch and Judy, vintage cars, brass band, bottle tombola, grand raffle, various food, craft and gift stalls, and the Vestry and Village

Hall teas. Special thanks goes to our main sponsors Carter Duthie and Lightning Recycling.

We raised £18,466.54 which have been carefully stewarded to advance our mission and support in our local communities. Here's how the funds were allocated:

1. Community Outreach and Charitable Giving (22%)

- ▶ **Santa's Secret Service:** bringing joy to children around Denham and Harefield at Christmas with Santa's sleigh and gifts with any monies raised going to assist the local schools.
- ▶ **Dog Lost:** monies were used to fund annual subscriptions, cages, blankets, food.
- ▶ **Lighthouse Holiday Club:** Run by St Mary's, supporting 32 local children during the summer holidays, our donation helped with food, drinks and activities for the week.
- ▶ **Hillingdon Foodbank:** Part of the Trussell Trust this foodbank supports over 300 families around the area with an ever-growing need.
- ▶ **Madelene Paton Lunch club:** a wonderful lunch club for the elderly at St Mark's Denham Green, which gives a lifeline to local residents not only for a delicious lunch but companionship twice a month.
- ▶ **Denham E-Act Primary Academy:** one of our local schools who used our donation to update their SEN (Special Educational Needs) quiet room with speciality toys.
- ▶ **Trinity Homeless Project:** helping up to 33 homeless people on a short-term basis. Our donation helped update their marquee and to host a Christmas dinner / party.
- ▶ **Denham Village School:** another of our local schools, our donation helped update their library shelving.
- ▶ **Harefield Hospital Healing Gardens:** a wonderfully peaceful and therapeutic space, our donation helped purchase new tools, plants, bulbs, seeds etc. for the coming year.

2. Church Building Maintenance and Improvements (78%)

Money from the Fayre helped us complete vital work in the 'middle churchyard' area including; removal of basal growth, felling a dead tree, prop and trim of the yew trees, tidying the graveyard and keeping gravestones clear, regular mowing in season, and clearance of an overgrown area to provide extra space for the burial of ashes.

(Cathy Macqueen)

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 list of all existing small groups can be found on our website (www.denhamparish.church/lifegroups).

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. As Azita is coming to the end of her training curacy we are working towards a leadership transition so that the group can continue to flourish.

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. During Lent we studied the Psalms of Ascent and in the autumn many of our groups used the "Welcome to the Family" course, which has been written to help us engage with and support Christian believers who come from a Muslim background. In October, one of our online small groups organised a study trip to Rome in the footsteps of St Paul, which was very rewarding for all who took part. This came on the back of our small groups studying St Pauls' Letter to the Romans in the previous years.

The role of lifegroup leaders is central in strengthening the core of our church. In 2024 they met once for breakfast and once on Zoom.

Alpha continues to be an important way in which we invite new people to explore the Christian faith and help others to grow as followers of Jesus (see separate article above). If you'd like to become a host or a helper in future, do get in touch with Edda and Christoph.

(Christoph Lindner)

FABRIC REPORT

This report summarises the works carried out in our fantastic grade 1 listed St Mary's Church building and surrounding churchyard in 2024. The Fabric Team is tasked with dealing with these issues and reports on its activities to the PCC. Straightforward maintenance tasks are carried out by Fabric Team members. Appropriately skilled trade contractors are commissioned to deal with many practical works. For larger projects and higher expenditure, outside professional assistance is often used. The firm of Evans Crawley acts for St Mary's as our church surveyor and is usually our first port of call.

The Fabric Team's remit falls into 3 broad categories:

1. Routine maintenance of St Mary's building

This includes both planned and reactive maintenance.

Routine maintenance included amongst other things, servicing and checks on such things as fire extinguishers, electrical appliances, gas boilers, alarms, lightning conductors and the tower clock.



Reactive maintenance included many minor repairs and replacement tasks that generally go unnoticed. However, the rectification of leaks from the vestry toilets and the sewerage blockage in the drains was remarked upon! Also, during the busy Christmas week there was a huge radiator leak during a service, which was challenging to keep under control and then find emergency plumbing help!

A big issue, was the failure of the lighting in the Chancel above the choir stalls. Temporary uplighting was installed and over two days the Fabric Team aided by our electrician built and moved temporary scaffolding so that two new banks of LED lighting could be installed.

2. Churchyard Maintenance

This includes the maintenance of all the churchyard areas to try and enhance the appearance and maintain safety for all users. The grass is regularly cut, a task made more difficult by the number of headstones and other obstructions that need to be navigated.

The Fabric Team have ad hoc 'garden parties' to help and last year employed gardening help was used for improvement projects like removing ivy from the headstones in the middle churchyard.

John Breese tended to the roses at the front of church that were again so lovely last summer.

Public footpaths that cross the site need to be kept safe and accessible and the brambles obstructing the path in the lower churchyard were heavily cut back last summer. The three yearly tree survey was conducted. Required safety work entailed, felling of a dead cherry tree,



further propping of one of our old yews and the removal of dead branches and basal growth from our many lime trees. A survey of all the headstones for safety was conducted (the Topple Test) and necessary remedial action was undertaken. The Fabric Team have named this the 'Topple and Tipple Test' to more accurately express the actions we undertake!

A large mound of building debris and earth, from the construction of the vestry in the 1960s, has been an unsightly welcome alongside the pathway in the middle churchyard. This area has been levelled and reseeded which has improved the appearance as well as providing the option for future burials of ashes by the wall that is now exposed.

The Fabric Team are keen to continue to improve the churchyard areas. To this end a biodiversity project, including an ecological survey by the Wildlife Trust, will be undertaken. This will enable a comprehensive plan for churchyard improvement to be instituted. We know the general Denham community places great value on the churchyard's appearance and we are hugely grateful for the contribution that the Fayre Committee has made to St Mary's, much of which is being used to achieve this goal.

3. Projects

Two major projects were progressed in the last year:

Tower Beam treatment and restoration

The activities and sex life of the death watch beetle (that has caused the Fabric Team much hilarity) has sadly resulted in considerable damage to the Tudor beams that support the clock floor in our 12th Century Norman Tower. The beams have recently been treated by specialists to kill the beetle. Unfortunately, the extent of the damage, exacerbated by damp issues in the tower walls, has led to structural weakness and a structural engineer's survey recommends restorative work.

Damp -Masonry issues

There is a major damp issue causing damage to the hard fabric of the church. Just look at the entrance and wall in the tower next time you come into church. Much of this has unintentionally been self-inflicted following the use of cementitious mortar (as opposed to traditional lime mortar) to seal the exterior flint work and plaster the internal walls, many years ago. Damp management has been a broadly 2-pronged approach. Firstly, water falling on the building needs to be carried away by good roofing, gutters, drainage pipes, gulleys and soakaways. This work was finally completed in 2024. Secondly, our damp specialists have recommended the stripping of cementitious mortar externally and internally

followed by a period of 'drying out' and finally appropriate restoration. This will be a major undertaking and the works will also encompass replacement and restoration of many masonry areas.

Both the above projects will be major undertakings which the Fabric Team will focus on in the coming year.

(Dexter Brown on behalf of the St Mary's Fabric Team)

GIVE & SHARE

Another year of providing help and hope in the name of our church.

Last year due to logistical challenges, the team opted to give vouchers rather than food parcels as our Christmas gifts.

The Give and Share team led by Caroline Goodwin and Craig Alexander purchased and distributed over 250 £40 vouchers to families in need at Christmas 2024. We responded to requests from local schools who identified families in need of our help with the ever-spiralling cost of the festive period.

We also gave each family a tin of chocolates and a small booklet telling the Christmas story. The voucher distribution was approximately £12,000.

We received excellent feedback from the schools telling us how grateful the families were to receive vouchers rather than goods, particularly as this enabled them to purchase food that they could or would, prefer to eat.

In the post Christmas period when families are often still struggling, Give and Share were able to issue more vouchers at a rate of 8-9 per week.

Since Christmas there have been several "one off" gifts where needed. For example, a family whose housing association had badly let them down, meaning they had no heating, hot water or electricity. We were able to assist them in finding and paying for temporary accommodation.

Craig and Caroline have run successful fundraising events and are planning more this year. Our budget is £14-15,000 for Christmas 2025 – so there is a lot of work to do!

Give and Share accounts can be viewed in the Treasurer's report.

(Report prepared by Clive Ashcroft)

LISTENING EXERCISE

In the second half of last year, the PCC commissioned Sandy Wickenden and Chris Macqueen to carry out a project called “The Listening Exercise”. The aim of the project was to listen to members of the church to better understand their experience of belonging to this church family, and in particular what helps and supports them in their Christian faith.

Over a period of several months, Sandy and Chris interviewed a total of 51 people. The information gathered was then carefully organised into themes, and a short summary written for each one. In February 2025 the PCC met at St Mark’s Hall to prayerfully consider the findings.

Having been immersed in the interviews and subsequent analysis, Chris reflects on some of the things that stood out for him:

- ▶ “What immediately comes across is just how important our church community is for people. Many told stories of the vital relationships they enjoy within the church family, often going back many years. A number also said they had become part of the church and had grown in faith primarily because someone personally invited them to join an Alpha course or life group.
- ▶ “Many people find the tradition of the church reassuring – the yearly and weekly rhythms and rituals of services are an anchor for people, giving them stability and a chance to ‘reset’ in the midst of busy lives. This is clearly an important role for the church to play, although we must also be mindful not to make the church so much about tradition that we fail to recognise when God is calling us into new things.
- ▶ “For some people interviewed, seeing themselves as a disciple – someone focused on becoming more like Jesus – is at the very heart of their faith. For others the idea of discipleship doesn’t seem to register; it’s not how they see their faith at all.
- ▶ “Quite a number of people expressed a concern about the future sustainability of our church. Although we have a good number of young children, there is a marked gap in young people and adults in the 20 – 40 age range.
- ▶ “Another strong message was a desire for greater participation of church members in the life of the church, discovering and using their gifts, even if our activities are less polished as a result. It wasn’t always clear though, whether those who suggest this are putting themselves forward, or looking to others to step up!”

The PCC identified the following topics that emerged strongly from the findings and which seem important for us to give further prayer and thought to:

- ▶ **Relationships:** “Bonding glue” – looking out for each other – as well as “bridging glue” – finding connections to the wider community; strengthening our pastoral care for each other.

- ▶ **Community:** Being an authentic local community that is different; learning how to bridge the gap between a “post-Christian world” and the church.
- ▶ **Gifts:** Supporting more people to identify their gifts and use them to serve others.
- ▶ **Prayer:** Strengthening prayer and creating more spaces for it.
- ▶ **Life groups:** Broadening participation in life groups as a place to learn and grow.
- ▶ **Youth:** Investing in creating the conditions to build a youth community that provides what young people most want and need.
- ▶ **Facilities:** Improving our facilities to build community and support mission.

Keep your eyes out for opportunities to participate as we work with different groups within the church to act on the findings of the Listening Exercise!

(Chris Macqueen)

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 sang again 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 2024 we said good-bye to some of our much loved church members; increasingly families make use of our live-streaming facility to enable family and friends who live further away or are not mobile enough to take part in funeral services at St Mary's. We continue to live-stream our 10.30am service which enables housebound people to take part or catch up. While the service is screened at White Plains Care Home on most Sundays, they also occasionally organised a minibus to take a group of residents to our 10.30am service at St Mary's, which is always a joyful occasion for them and the rest of the church family.

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. We therefore continue to ask those who can physically come to St Mary’s Church on a Sunday to give it a go. 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*.

Hospitality is about more than just Sunday mornings. A big thank you to those church members who invite others for a meal or a cup of tea or a walk. 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. Let’s consider inviting especially those who live on their own!

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 (www.thirtyoneeight.org).

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 continued to live in St Francis House until he left to go to his new parish.

The additional maintenance issues mentioned last year have in fact turned out to be much more serious than first thought, with the ground floor slab having dropped a couple of centimetres leaving cracks in the internal walls and problems with the pipes of the central heating system. Repairs were estimated by two building companies at over £130,000 but we have been able to complete the work for less than half of that with the house being let to tenants from 1 April this year.

The refurbishment includes a complete new combi heating and hot water system, a new kitchen and bathroom and utility room. The house was decorated throughout and new quality carpets and blinds installed. Improved insulation has been installed in the loft and the double glazed windows serviced and repaired.

The expenditure has been considerable but the house is now in excellent condition as we would wish for either our clergy or our tenants. The PCC is mindful of the new legislation placing extra responsibilities on landlords and are determined that we will always be seen as an exemplary landlord.

(Mike Stewart)

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.

Some additional maintenance and repairs will be incurred in 2025, when Azita leaves for her new Parish but the house does not require a complete refurbishment as at St Francis House.

The budget for 2025 does not envisage any third party rent being received for St Mark's House.

(Mike Stewart)

ST MARK'S HALL

The committee met three times over the year. The committee continues to comprise of Michèle Lee as Chairperson, Edda Lindner as Vice Chair, Rev. Christoph Lindner and Brian O'Regan (Fabric and financial Lead). Samantha Carter stepped down from the committee and we were delighted to welcome Jane Brown, Churchwarden, in her place. In addition, we also welcomed in June, Brenda and Paul Davis to the committee. Julie Laughland has kindly continued to write the minutes for our meetings.

Our webpage on the Church website is now live for hirers. It gives information about the hall and provides an enquiry form. This has proved a good resource for one-off hirers.

There has been no change in hire fees. We have updated the terms and conditions to all hirers and regular hirers will now receive them on an annual basis. We have continued to have a 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, and DPC Memory Café.

Our church runs a range of activities in the Hall: "The "Well" prayer gathering meets on the second Monday of every month. In addition, Little Lions continue to run weekly during term time, and Café Church on the first Sunday of the month. Azita Jabbari's lifegroup used the Hall on Monday evenings due to the size of the group.

We have continued to see a good number of one-off hirers which continues to be mainly for birthday parties, although we have had a couple of christening parties as well. The Hall was also used as a Polling Station for the General Election held on 4th July 2024.

The first aid training continued in January 2024 with 3 half day sessions having started the programme in December 2023. In total we had 61 participants with 54% stating it was the first time they had attended such a course. We had excellent feedback. This included the course's comprehensiveness, covering not only CPR and defibrillator usage but also how to assist in cases of choking,



heart attacks, strokes, and diabetes management. All participants felt that the breadth of knowledge boosted their confidence in emergency situations. Many participants showed interest in attending annual courses which the committee will consider for next year.

The Lighthouse holiday club ran from 28 – 30 August at St Mark's Hall. It was a fantastic success, bringing together 32 children for three days of fun, faith, and friendship. The hall and outside area provided a wonderful space for engaging activities, worship, and community-building, making a real impact on both the children and volunteers. We were also blessed with 17 dedicated volunteers who helped make it all possible.

We are delighted to report that we now have broadband. Minor repairs have continued over the year. The fascias and guttering were repaired in the spring. The PAT testing was carried out on all electrical appliances and the Hall had its annual electrical inspection.

The Automated External Defibrillator (AED, attached to the outside of St Mark's House) is now part of the Circuit, the national defibrillator Network and is checked weekly by one of the committee members to ensure that it is always ready for use. Although the address of the AED was given to an emergency crew in December, it was not used as another one was located nearer to the emergency. To date therefore, it has not had to be used.

I would like to thank all the committee for their continued hard work during the year. Our thanks goes also to John Breese for tending the flower beds.

(Michele Lee)

ST MARK'S DEVELOPMENT

St Mark's Hall in Denham Green replaced the existing wooden chapel on that site just over sixty years ago and has given Denham Green and the parish as a whole great service but the PCC believes that the time has come to give it a major refurbishment to make it fit and ready for the next sixty years.

This dream has been considered by the St Mark's Hall Committee and by the PCC for several years now but the cost of such a scheme was always more than we could afford without taking unacceptable financial risks.

However, this roadblock has recently changed and due to some extraordinarily generous recent donations we now have most of the funds to turn this ambition into a reality.

Last year the PCC set up a St Mark's Hall Development Team who have been working with Evans Crawley, the Parish's Chartered Surveyors, to develop a plan for the Hall that can take the project forward within the agreed budget.

Over the autumn of 2024 a number of ideas were considered and discussed in detail. Some ideas fell by the wayside as being impractical, too expensive or perhaps just not what we needed, but steadily a consensus emerged that would see St Mark's Hall refurbished and enlarged so that it would become a more flexible, welcoming and substantial site. These plans were presented to the PCC at a meeting in February this year when they were received with enthusiasm.

We have now appointed architects to take these ideas and enhance them to develop a detailed design that has flair and style and makes the new Hall of even greater value to its local community and encourages more people to come to Church services and events that are based there.

We look forward to sharing this with you, our Church family, and the wider local community as soon as possible.

(Mike Stewart)

ST MARY'S PATRONAL FESTIVAL

► *See Churchwardens' Report*

THE HAVEN

The Haven is a bereavement support group providing a safe and compassionate space for individuals who have lost loved ones. The group aims to offer emotional support, companionship, and encouragement to those navigating the challenges of grief. It continues to provide a vital support system for those experiencing loss. By fostering a caring and understanding environment, it helps individuals navigate their grief with greater resilience and hope.

Objectives

- To provide a welcoming and understanding community for the bereaved.
- To offer a space for sharing experiences, emotions, and memories in a supportive environment.
- To facilitate healing through conversation, reflection, and mutual encouragement.

- ▶ To provide guidance on coping strategies and signpost individuals to additional pastoral or professional support when needed.

Structure and Activities

The Haven meets regularly, allowing attendees to share their grief journey in a confidential and non-judgmental setting. Meetings often include:

- ▶ Open discussions on grief-related topics.
- ▶ Opportunities for prayer or quiet reflection.
- ▶ Social elements, such as tea, coffee, and informal chats, to foster community and connection.

Group Size and Participation

Currently, The Haven has **11 members**. Some attendees feel they have "turned a corner" in their grief journey and no longer feel the need to attend the group regularly. This reflects the natural progression of healing, but also highlights the importance of continuing to welcome new members who may be in need of support.

Impact and Feedback

The Haven has been a source of comfort for many individuals, particularly those who feel isolated in their grief. Attendees appreciate the opportunity to talk openly without pressure or expectation. Many have expressed gratitude for the friendships and understanding they have found through the group.

Challenges and Future Plans

One of the ongoing challenges is ensuring that those who may benefit from The Haven's support are aware of its existence. Strengthening outreach efforts, including through funeral directors, and community networks, could help expand its reach. Additionally, exploring collaborations with other bereavement support services may enhance the group's ability to serve those in need.

(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 2024. 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.

We expanded our small team of service leaders for 10.30 with five church members who now lead on a regular basis and provided extra support for Azita and Nnamdi during the sabbatical.

Why do we continue to do this after the sabbatical?

It is an important expression of how the Body of Christ operates: Everyone brings their gifts and only together can we grow and serve the church and the world. It

guards against an unhealthy focus on the vicar and ordained clergy and gives us resilience and variety in how we lead. Together we are the 'priesthood of all believers'. In 2025 we will only have one ordained minister for a while, after Azita moves on, so it will be more important than ever to share ministry and build teams for that.

In September, a comprehensive AV upgrade introduced screens in church, as well as a much more robust streaming system. After some teething problems, this system has shown its potential and is being used in many ways - including some funerals where families were able to show photos of their loved one. A big thank you to CAVS who not only designed and installed the system, but also provided excellent support to iron out the niggles that inevitably come with the installation of a complex system. We are so grateful to our volunteer tech team who operate the system each week. Training on it was a big step up for them. We are looking to strengthen the team for both AV and sound operations. We are also short of moderators for the online community. Full training will be provided for all these roles. Please contact Christoph if you want to find out more.

There are so many opportunities to 'grow hearts of service' in our worship and everyone is invited to contribute with their gifts!

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

Café Church (first Sunday at St Mark's) was held eight times in 2024 and was very well attended throughout the year. Special highlights were services which featured the life and faith of a church member or guest speaker. In 2024 we interviewed Susan and Ian Bickerstaffe, and Paul and Brenda Davis. 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 - Mothering Sunday, Holy Week and Easter, the baptism of five Iranians, our "Thank you" service for the Maduka Family, Harvest, St Mary's Festival, Remembrance, "Remembering Loved Ones", Advent and Christmas.

At Christmas, we hosted Christmas concerts and services for both local schools at St Mary's, as well as a Christingle service for Denham Village School. We also hosted our first ever Advent Film Night at St Mary's.

(C. Lindner)



Holy Communion at Denham Manor Care Home



Palm Sunday



Denham Village Fayre



The Ministry Team, December 2024



The Maduka Family