

Annual Report

A summary of the ministry of St Mary's Church during 2021

This report forms part of the APCM *Annual Parochial Church Meeting* on **Sunday 22nd May 2022 at 11.45am** following a 10am service. The agenda for the meeting is included in the report.



Since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.... We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:1-5

APCM Agenda – Sunday 22nd May 2022, 11.45am

Onsite and Online

There will be a 10am Communion service in church, followed by coffee and doughnuts, with the meeting starting at 11.45am, and finishing around 12.45pm.

Zoom meeting login Meeting ID: **834 5754 6040**

Passcode: **APCM**

Welcome and opening prayer

Annual Meeting of Parishioners *To elect two Churchwardens*

1. Churchwarden's Report
2. Election of two Churchwardens

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of APCM 9th May 2021
 - 2.1. Matters arising from the minutes
3. Thanks to those standing down
4. Appointments and elections
 - 4.1. Independent Examiner appointment
 - 4.2. PCC member elections
5. Electoral Roll, report on changes
6. Safeguarding Report
7. Finance Report
8. Church Buildings - a resource for mission
9. Stoke Bishop C.E. Primary School report
10. Deanery Synod Report
11. Annual Report *including an opportunity to ask questions*
12. Looking ahead
13. Any Other Business *Must be submitted before the meeting (see note below)*
14. Closing prayer

NOTES:

- You are eligible to vote at the APCM if you are on the Electoral Roll. Anyone living in the parish (or on the Electoral Roll) can vote at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners.
- Those joining via Zoom will be able to vote and ask questions. The process for this will be explained at the start of the meeting.
- Any person entitled to attend the Annual Meeting may, under Any Other Business (AOB), ask any question about church matters or bring about a discussion by moving a general resolution or by moving to give any particular recommendation to the Council in relation to its duties. All AOB must be submitted to the Vicar by email, at least 24 hours before the meeting vicar@stmarysb.org.uk

Contents Page

Letter from the Vicar	4
Our Staff Team	5
Worship and Teaching	
• Worshipping together	7
• Growing and learning together	10
• Services to mark Life Events	11
Mission and Community	
• Youth, Children and Families	12
○ Connecting with children, young people and parents	
○ Partnership with Stoke Bishop C.E. Primary School	
• Caring and praying for each other	17
○ Small Groups	
○ Pastoral Care	
○ Prayer	
○ Staying connected as a church family	
• Connecting with the parish and beyond	21
○ Avonside Mission Area (ASMA)	
○ Hazelnut Community Farm	
○ The Messenger Magazine	
○ Student ministry	
○ Supporting our Mission Partners	
Resourcing Mission	
• Our office team	28
• Our building	29
○ A space for the community	
○ Repair and maintenance	
○ Redeveloping the Church Rooms	
• Our PCC	32
• Our finances	34
○ Giving to St Mary's	
○ Financial income and expenditure	
• Safeguarding	36
Appendix	
• Deanery Synod report	38

Letter from the Vicar

When I talk with people about their experiences of the pandemic, they often say that the start of 2021 was the hardest season of all. The year certainly got off to a bumpy start, with the January lockdown and school closure announced at the last minute, at a time when many people were feeling fatigued and despondent.

As I reflect on how St Mary's fared during 2021, I continue to be amazed and thankful for all the ways that God has helped us to navigate the many changes. **We have shown resilience as a church, and a willingness to respond flexibly, often considering the needs of others ahead of our own preferences.**

A few months ago, I was able to attend a conference with some other church leaders, and I listened with dismay to many accounts of churches which have floundered, or in some cases imploded, during the pandemic, with more than a few leaders on the verge of burnout. **I came away feeling profoundly grateful for this church community, and for the blessing that you all are to me, and for the enormous benefit of having colleagues to serve alongside,** both within St Mary's and across the Mission Area. It's a sobering truth that many church leaders have very little by way of support from the members of their churches or from other ministers locally.

2021 wasn't all plain sailing, but we charted it together, and **I do feel we managed to stay faithful to our call of following Jesus and making Him known.** I hope that you can find evidence of that on every page of this Annual Report. Of course there's more we could have done, and we've made mistakes and learnt from them, but we have every reason to be encouraged.

In the year ahead I would love to see us all become bolder in sharing our faith (me included!) and for us to see many new faces in our church family photos by the time the APCM rolls round again. Now is a good a time as any to ask ourselves who we could be intentionally talking with about our faith and to be praying for opportunities to do so.

My hope and prayer is that St Mary's will continue to grow because people are putting their faith in Jesus. And that as we grow in number we will also be growing in diversity and growing as whole-hearted, whole-life disciples. It's such a privilege to be part of the St Mary's family. Thank you to every person in the church for all the ways you enrich our shared life of faith.



Revd Jema Ball
Vicar of St Mary's



Overview of the Staff Team

For many years St Mary's has benefitted from the gifts and skills of a large team of staff and ministers. This team is a mix of lay and ordained individuals, some are employed, others give their time freely to the church. The team meet regularly on Monday mornings for prayer, worship and business. When you hear the word 'resource' being used in relation to St Mary's, for the most part it is the people listed below who are this 'resource'. **It is through the generosity and flexibility of the team that St Mary's can help to resource the other churches in the Avonside Mission Area.** This has been particularly important during 2021 as St Mary's Shirehampton (one of the ASMA churches) became vacant, and have needed additional support in all kinds of ways.



At the end of 2021 the Staff Team were:

Rev Jema Ball, Vicar
Rev Simon Potter, Associate Vicar
Rev Jo Morris, Curate
Rev Jennifer Hall, Associate Minister
Rev Hazel Trapnell, Associate Minister
Rev Angela Cattell, Associate Minister
Canon Peter Robottom, Lay Minister
Brian Richardson, Lay Minister
Rachel Powlesland, Children and Families Minister
Hayley Brydges, Youth Minister
Carrie Patterson, Operations Manager
Rachel Sandford, Administrator
Lucy Allen, Cleaning and minor maintenance
Patrick Massey, ASMA Ministry Experience Intern
Ann Thomas, Churchwarden
Caroline Jowett-Ive, Churchwarden
Rev John White, Pioneer Curate*

Stipendiary (F/T)
Stipendiary (F/T)
Self-supporting (P/T)
Self-supporting (P/T)
Self-supporting (P/T)
Self-supporting (P/T)
Unpaid (P/T)
Unpaid (P/T)
Paid (F/T)
Paid (F/T)
Paid (P/T)
Paid (P/T)
Paid (P/T)
Paid (F/T) by the diocese
Unpaid (P/T)
Unpaid (P/T)
Stipendiary (F/T)

***In his pioneering role, John continues to lead Hazelnut Community Farm, a new church community which he established in 2020. John's time has been entirely focused on HCF during 2021, and his formal links with St Mary's will come to an end this year. In June we will be celebrating with him the growth of HCF under his leadership.**

Comings and goings in 2021

In August we were sad to say goodbye to Matt Hurley, our Worship Director. Matt's personal circumstances changed during the year which meant that in

practical terms his ministry amongst us ended in February, and he resigned from his position in August. Matt is now training to be a secondary school teacher. Megan Clews, our former Ministry Experience Intern left us in the summer and is now training for ordination at Trinity College. It has been good to welcome her successor Patrick Massey, who joined us in November.

Jo Morris was ordained as a priest at the Cathedral in July, though sadly the restrictions on large gatherings meant that we were unable to have a big celebration to mark this important occasion. In May the PCC agreed to increase the salaried hours of our Children and Families Minister, and Rachel's role is now full time. We continue to benefit greatly from Rachel's gifts and energy, both through our church-based ministry with children, and her extensive involvement with Stoke Bishop C.E. Primary School.

Placement Students

St Mary's often feels like the church equivalent of a 'teaching hospital' (which specializes in training medics) because we are blessed to welcome many Placement Students and their families each year and to be part of their training and development. These ordinands (trainee vicars) are involved with serving in various areas of church life including leading and preaching. In turn they are supported and coached by the clergy here. This is a way of St Mary's being a blessing to the wider church.

In June we said goodbye to Pete Norris, Ben Notley and Sasha Braun. Continuing students who have been with us throughout the year are Holly Horspole, Annabel Stott and Tom Boulter. **We welcomed five new students in September – Andrew Bailey, Lucy Bush, Susanna Rosemeyer, Juliet Dellow and Anna Mayo.** Most of these students are training at Trinity College, but we now also have the blessing of partnering with Sarum College in Salisbury, where Juliet is training part-time over three years from her home base in Bristol. In addition to these students with us throughout the year we also welcomed Lucy Bush and Jo Harbidge on a short-term placement during June as part of their course requirement. Lucy enjoyed her time with us so much that her and her family moved to be part of St Mary's full-time from September!

Give thanks for: The depth of relationships which exist within the staff team and for all that our Placement Students contribute to the life of our church.

Please pray: For those in the staff team whose shape of ministry is changing due to stage of life or other factors.

Worship and Teaching

Worshipping together

Gathering for worship (whether that be online or onsite) has continued to be a priority for the church family during 2021, and much time, energy and creativity has been invested by many people to facilitate this. The early part of the year was a particular challenge, after the PCC took the painful decision in January to close the church for gathered worship once again. Services were led by members of the team from within the church building, with the congregation joining on Zoom. This pattern continued until March 21st when we returned to 'dual mode' services onsite and online.



After Easter the 'livestream' Morning Prayer services on YouTube came to an end, and we began to see more people returning to worshipping onsite. As Spring became Summer it was really encouraging to be able to welcome more of our families back to onsite worship, at the 10.30am services and Explore@4.

September marked a significant shift in the pattern of our worship as we moved to a Week A, Week B format. This has worked well and has helped with the complex task of co-ordinating ministers on rotas! It has meant that most of our families with children/teens are attending church more regularly than prior to the pandemic. It was such a joy in September to relaunch our Sunday groups for 0-14's under the new name of SHINE, it was great to see some of the group leaders returning to serving in this way and to have some new people join the team.

- Week A:** 9am Holy Communion
10.30am Morning Worship *with Shine on Sundays*
4pm Together@4
- Week B:** 9am Holy Communion
10.30am Communion for Everyone
4pm Explore@4



Together@4 was a new gathering established in September on alternate Sunday afternoons. This was planned with a small team of lay and ordained people with the aim of providing an accessible opportunity to worship together informally and reflect on God's word. It has a 'loose structure' based around Welcome (refreshments!), Worship (singing and praying), Word (short reflection and then group discussion of a Bible passage) and Witness (individual testimony). Around 10-12 people generally attend and give encouraging feedback about how this gathering supports them spiritually, however we have not yet seen numerical growth and are praying for wisdom on how to proceed.

Another addition in September was **Connect on Tuesdays**, a re-launch of our midweek Communion service, but with a social and creative time beforehand. The number of people staying for Communion has been steadily increasing, and sometimes reaches double figures! Read more about Connect later in this report.

Since Matt Hurley left St Mary's we have been blessed by the musical gifts of members of the ministry team and some of the Placement Students. In July congregational singing resumed (behind our masks) much to the delight of many. **The St Mary's Singers regrouped in May and began to lead the sung worship at the 9am services.** Over the second half of the year the Singers have become increasingly involved again, culminating in a very special Carol Service in December.

Some of the many unsung heroes of the year have been those involved with the complex task of running the technical side of our dual mode services. **Under the guidance of Hayley Brydges the Tech Team were formed and trained. The load and pressure placed on these people has been considerable, not least because of the complicated set up in church.** We are all really grateful for their servant-heartedness. Special thanks go to Hayley, with the ongoing support of Brian Richardson and Peter Robottom, who stepped into the breach when Matt Hurley left, and to Simon Horspole who has been faithfully uploading the Sunday sermons to our YouTube channel week by week.



Changes over the year to our 'mode' of worshipping together

January: All services were taking place online using Zoom.

Mid-March: Services returned to being *Onsite and Online*.

After Easter: As restrictions were eased, gathering for worship became easier and Explore@4 returned onsite. The St Mary's Singers began leading the sung worship again at the 9am services.

July: Congregational singing returned to our Sunday services.

August: 10am services through the summer holidays were well received.

September: A new pattern of Sunday and midweek services was launched.

'Special services' which have taken place

ASMA Ash Wednesday service on Zoom (led from St Mary's)

Church Weekend at Home – a combined 10am online service as part of this event

Holy Week and Easter services – a mixture of onsite and online

10am services during August

Harvest celebration services including a visit from the NW Bristol Foodbank team

A service for those who have been bereaved – October

Remembrance Sunday service and parade

Christingle Explore@4 service

Carols in Advent – short reflections based around carols each week

Candlelit Carol Service

Open the Door to Christmas – a special Christmas Eve Trail

Attendance figures

As it was in 2020, this year has been unusual in terms of attendance. However, the figures below give a flavour of how many people have joined in with our regular services, onsite and online. The morning service and Explore@4 averages exclude the special services at Easter and Christmas.

Average attendance figures at St Mary's services during 2021					
	Onsite		Online		Average total attendance
	Adults	Under 16's	Adults	Under 16's	
9am Services*	51	-	19	-	70
10.30am Services*	82	8	27	4	121
Explore@4	18	16	-	-	34
Together@4	11	2	-	-	13
Tuesday Communion	7	-	-	-	7

*These figures are based on the services which were 'dual mode' during the year. The figures for the services which were entirely online are not included here.

These figures show that online worship has continued to be very important for some people in the church family. A very small number of people have drifted away from the church during the year (and a few have moved away or died), but there continues to be a steady trickle of new people joining the church, which is very encouraging.

Give thanks for: The return of many individuals, couples and families to onsite worship during the year, and for the new people who have joined us.

Please pray: For those who are new to St Mary's, that they would feel welcomed by the church and find ways to become involved and build friendships.

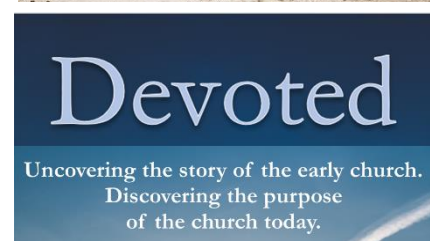
Growing and learning together

We have continued to explore God's Word together over the year, usually through teaching series' at our Sunday services and in small groups during the week. Since September we have ensured that everyone in the church is exploring the same part of the Bible, but our young members have been tackling it in age-specific ways at SHINEonSundays and at Explore@4. During 2021 we have looked at:

- A journey with Jesus through Mark
- Devoted – the Church in Acts
- Soul Music – exploring the Psalms
- Summer in the Med (Paul's Missionary Journeys)
- Getting on well
- Opening the Door to Christmas

The Autumn term of 2021 saw roughly 60 people from across the churches of the Avonside Mission Area take part in the **Living in Love and Faith course**. It was offered by the Church of England as a conversation opportunity looking at Christian teaching and learning on identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage.

Ten facilitators were trained and offered the course online and at St Mary's, Stoke Bishop over five sessions. This was one of the first LLF courses in the Diocese and was the largest of its size. As such, there was interest from both Deanery and Diocese in the learning that St Mary's might offer in organising a large course of this type. The model has since been adapted in other contexts. Participants valued the opportunity to hear and interact with the views of others, and to share their own.



Attendees reflected that they were grateful for the opportunity to attend and to have challenging conversations in a supportive atmosphere. Many found that, due to the complex nature of the subject area, they left with more questions that they arrived with. The course finished with an opportunity to contribute to the national church debate, and also the encouragement to seek, to listen to, and to follow the voice of God on these complicated moral and ethical issues.

Services to mark Life Events

2021 brought many opportunities to welcome and serve individuals, couples and families who wanted to make St Mary's a significant part of their life events (baptisms, weddings and funerals).

During the year there were **seven weddings** and **one renewal of vows** service. At the start of 2021 only six people, including the bride and groom, were legally allowed to attend weddings due to the Covid restrictions. But as the year progressed restrictions were lifted which meant couples could celebrate their day with many more family and friends.

There were **seven baptisms** during the year, which were great celebrations. **In the Spring we were delighted to baptise two men, each of whom had had a series of conversations about faith in preparation for baptism and who came to a clear understanding of and profession of faith during those conversations.** Both had made the initial approach to St Mary's asking to explore the possibility of baptism, having felt an inner prompt to do so. It is a reminder to us that, whilst gathered church activities are an enormous encouragement to us and opportunity for sharing faith together, one-to-one God-inspired conversations and prayers for our friends and neighbours often over many months or years are also of huge value. If you/anyone you know is considering baptism, do contact the Church Office.

2021 was a year that continued to have many funerals held only at the crematorium. However, as restrictions lifted, we were able to offer St Mary's for funerals and also held some Thanksgiving services for those bereaved in 2020 and who now could come together to remember lost loved ones. Over the whole year there were **twenty-two funerals and five thanksgiving services**. We also held **ten interment of ashes services**.

Throughout the year there has been bespoke support offered to those who have been bereaved. This has often been in the form of visits from members of the clergy around the time of a funeral and in the months afterwards. Jennifer Hall continued to run the Bereavement Group through the year. A service to remember lost loved ones was held in October with around sixty people attending. Joan Kelsey and Andy Judd have been involved with this service for many years and their input has been really appreciated.

Give thanks for: The wonderful opportunities that Life Events offer to share the Christian message with people who do not regularly come to church services.

Please pray: For those who are living with loss, that they would know God's comfort and receive the support they need.

Mission and Community

Youth, children and families

2021 has been about re-establishing the rhythms of our ministry amongst children, families and young people, and it's been exciting to see growth and development. Some activities have resumed, others have been re-launched in a new way and other things have emerged. Rachel and Hayley are a brilliant team, who empower others to work alongside them in serving the younger generations. They continue to be

grateful for all those that serve, support and encourage them along the way and, most importantly, faithfully pray for this area of ministry.



Intergenerational friendships at St Mary's

Tiny Sparks, Bright Sparks in the Park and Bright Sparks in the Hall!

We continued to run Tiny Sparks and Bright Sparks in the Park through the first half of the year, welcoming new mums and maintaining links with others. It was with great delight that in September, we were once again able to open our doors for Bright Sparks in the Hall. It was lovely to welcome friends we had met through Tiny Sparks and Bright Sparks in the Park as well as welcome back those from before, some with growing families! We have used the opportunity of a break to freshen up our format and introduce a more faith-based structure.

Fuel (School Years 6-9)

Starting 2021 online, Fuel moved to meeting in person in the main church building after Easter. It has continued to grow throughout 2021 as a result of young people inviting their friends, our links with the local primary school, and word of mouth

between parents. The evening involves games, Bible teaching or talking about topics requested by the young people and praying for each other.



Hayley and some of the young people who come to Fuel attending a city-wide worship event

SHINE

September brought an exciting new development to our Children, Youth and Families Ministry. After prayerful thought and discussions, we re-branded our Children and Youth ministry under the new name of SHINE and introduced a Week A and Week B pattern in terms of the different activities on offer. **We recruited some new church members to serve our children and young people, and welcomed back others who were involved prior to 2020.** We have found a marked increase in regular attendance of families. Continuing to follow the same sermon series as the rest of the Church, from an appropriate angle or level, encourages the feeling of togetherness.

SHINEonSundays (Week A) takes place during our 10.30am service and provides an age-specific space for children and young people (0-14s) to ask questions and explore the Bible with their peers. We start all together in the hall, sharing the Bible passage in a variety of ways and then split into three different groups for more learning and/or in-depth discussion. This format has also allowed for some flexibility when we have reduced numbers of children or adults on team, enabling our young people to shine as role models to our younger members, through their support and conversations.

Explore@4 (Week B) continued on Zoom for the first part of the year, moving to face to face services after Easter. It has gone from strength to strength as more families have come along, including some families that



Children and adults praying using sand at Explore@4

previously attended Messy Church. Attracting mostly families of Primary aged children and younger, we now have a regular core attending each time as we explore the Bible in a creative and informal way. Our Christingle Explore@4 allowed us to welcome a large number of additional families and enjoy making Christingles together.

Trails and more

Further lockdown in the early part of the year meant we needed to be more inventive, leading to the creation of **The Jesus Story Trail** for primary school aged children; this involved following a map around the parish to find QR codes linking to narrated Bible Stories. We also produced **Church Detectives** sheets for children and families visiting the Church.

Set up in the Churchyard on Good Friday, **Explore Together at Easter** guided people through the last week of Jesus' life in an interactive way, providing space for reflection and quiet for all ages. Crafts in the Vicarage car park also provided opportunities for further conversations.



The **Open the Door** Christmas Eve Trail invited people to peep into garages around the parish and see into homes of characters from the Christmas Story. Despite last minute changes due to Covid uncertainties and dreadful weather conditions, we were able to welcome families into the Church to collect their craft bags, mulled wine and a mince pie at the end of the trail before heading back out into the rain.

In our desire to support parents in nurturing their children's faith, Jema and Rachel hosted a seminar about growing faith at the Church Weekend at Home this year.

Oasis Academy Brightstowe, Shirehampton

Throughout the year Hayley spent one day each week in Oasis Brightstowe School alongside Robyn Coleman (Youth and Student Minister at Highgrove Church), building on long-standing links between the school and local churches. They have been support staff in the BrightZone – an area dedicated to student wellbeing. Their time in the school consists of 1-2-1 conversations and small group work around resilience, anxiety, managing stress and social skills. This significant investment of Hayley's time has been a blessing to the Mission Area and is an important aspect of ministry outside of our parish.



ASMA Prayer and support

The Children, Youth and Family Ministers across ASMA (including Highgrove Church) meet once a term to chat and pray. This is a valuable time to share ideas and celebrate the areas in which we have seen God working in our children, young people and families all across the Mission Area.

Give thanks for: The many ways that children, young people and their parents have been supported in their faith during the year.

Please pray: That many people from within the church family would feel called by God to support our children and young people in their Christian faith by being involved with the groups and activities we offer.

Members of St Mary's meet to pray for our Children, Youth and Families Ministry every Monday 9-9.30am during term time in the James Chapel – all are welcome to join in!

Partnership with Stoke Bishop Church of England Primary School

We have continued to deepen our strong links with Stoke Bishop Church of England Primary School over the last year, serving the school community in a large variety of different ways.

The third lockdown at the start of the year saw us return to leading **Collective Worship online**. Our Monday Moment every week, enabled children, their families and members of staff in their homes, together with classes of children and teachers in school to join us on Zoom, to share a Bible story, reflection, prayers and songs. It was lovely that children were also able to participate, whether they were at home or based in the classroom, and that the whole school community could come together despite such challenging times.

Children, teachers, parents...
joining together for a



11.30-11.45am on Mondays via Zoom
*A time to pause and be thankful as a whole school community,
supported by St Mary's Church*

Meeting ID: 860 4516 6237
Passcode: children1
<https://tinyurl.com/y6f2lsq2>

zoom 

As restrictions eased, we were able to return to **Collective Worship in Hubs** (two year groups) in the school hall; the Reception children also took part in their own assemblies in the school hall. Throughout this year, Covid restrictions have meant we have had to remain flexible in our planning, yet we have still been able to serve the school week by week and join in with special celebrations at key times in the year (**Easter, Harvest, Remembrance Day and Christmas**) **Carols on the playground** took place instead of a planned Christmas Service in the church, and we joined in with the **Y6 Leavers Service and picnic**, presenting Youth Bibles to each of the children as a gift from St Mary's.

Children enjoyed the Christmas in a Box event that Rachel was able to run safely in school with some of the classes



It has been a pleasure to be able to go into the classrooms this year to take part in different activities, including a **Godly Play session** about Abraham and Sarah for Y4, a **Q&A with Y3 in RE** as they asked the question 'Has Christmas lost its true meaning?' and the opportunity to share **Christmas in a Box** to Y5 and Y6.

In the summer term we were also able to offer **Prayer Spaces** for Y3, 4 and 5, an outdoor Prayer Space on the school field for children in Y2 and an **'It's Your Move' Transition session** for Y6.

Throughout much of the year Rachel and Hayley have been present **in the playground on Wednesday lunchtimes** to be available to children that may just

want to chat. This has been part of the Wellbeing agenda which has been a prominent focus throughout the year for the staff and Governors. We have been seeking to ensure that everyone involved with the school has the support needed to flourish, recognising that the pandemic has been particularly hard for some. The staff have had a particularly challenging year and we hope that **provisions of cakes, biscuits and cards from St Mary's** have offered some encouragement as well as demonstrating our immense gratitude for all that they do.

A great addition to the school team this year was **Darren Hunt, the new Deputy Head**. Jema was involved with Darren's interview in March 2021 and he started in September. Darren is already using his considerable experience to great effect as both a class teacher and in his work on the school curriculum.

The **Parent Prayer Group** has continued to meet on zoom, a small but regular number of parents meeting to pray for the needs of children, staff and wider community of the school on a regular basis.



It is fantastic that our link with the school is further strengthened through a number of our congregation serving in different ways too, whether that is **listening to children read** in school, or over the phone through the **Silver Stories scheme** or baking cakes for the staff room. If you would like to be involved in any way, do get in touch with either Jema or Rachel.

Jema, Beverly and Rachel represent St Mary's on the Governing Board which, amongst other things, enables us to support the school in upholding the strong Christian Ethos. **We were very pleased the school received Good in their Ofsted inspection in the Autumn term, an excellent achievement given the current inspection guidelines and a tribute to the hard work of all involved.**

Give thanks for: The open doors between St Mary's and the primary school which enable so much ministry to take place on the school site.

Please pray: For children who are continuing to find life difficult and for the school team as they help them to flourish.

Caring and praying for each other

Care and Support

It has been wonderful to see the creative ways in which care and support have been offered over the year, both practically and spiritually, and the missional opportunities that this has afforded. Read more in the next section about the important role of small groups in ensuring that individuals are known, loved and cared for by the church community.



It has been heart-warming to discover countless ways in which members of our church family demonstrate servant-hearted love in quietly supporting their neighbours and one another. Some examples include regular telephone calls and shopping while we were in various lockdowns; meals cooked and delivered; small groups conducted by zoom; virtual catch-up-cuppa which ran from January to May, when we were still unable to meet in large groups in person, and a new monthly walking group to enable people to meet and enjoy discovering our wonderful neighbourhood.

Mothering Sunday prompted a new initiative to bless and encourage people - buckets of daffodils with a message from the parish church were left prominently in different locations for people to help themselves. Wendy Hughes and Paul Spencer have been involved with leading emotional wellbeing groups following the Kintsugi Hope model, both at St Mary's and across the Mission Area, and these have been really appreciated by those attending. The confidential prayer ring has been accessed on several occasions and supported people with urgent prayer requests.



Under the leadership of Jo Morris, Connect-on-Tuesdays was introduced in September as a new mid-week gathering for fellowship with the particular vision of reaching out to people who may be unable to come to church on Sundays or who live alone. Connect involves Coffee, Chat, optional Craft and Holy Communion and it has been really encouraging seeing this group flourish and friendships forming. Wreath-making at Christmas was a highlight and it has been wonderful learning from one another as people shared their own particular area of crafty expertise. We're very thankful for Ann Thomas, Lucy Allen and Vivienne

Francois, who carefully plan the craft activities, as well as everyone who provides cake and those who give lifts to people who are otherwise housebound.

Jesus tells us to love our neighbours and says that whenever we help one another we are helping him (Matt. 25:34-40) - we are so thankful for our church family who follow Jesus and make Him known by the care and love so generously shown to one another.

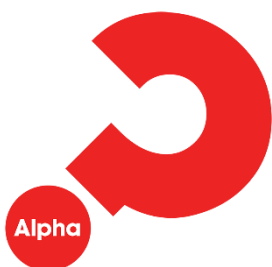
Small Groups

We thank God for the practical care, spiritual support, and pastoral encouragement that our small groups and their leaders have provided to members throughout 2021. Simon Potter leads this area of ministry.

Give thanks for: The care and support which has been offered to many people, including those not yet part of the church.

Please pray: That over this year there will be a renewed uptake of involvement in our small groups.

Notwithstanding the Covid restrictions in 2021, the majority of our small groups have continued to meet on Zoom/in person/after a pause as restrictions allowed. In Spring 2021, several groups enjoyed using the Lent Course material produced in association with Hazelnut Community Farm looking at issues of creation care, called Come to Life. This was followed in Summer 2021 by a course in Acts produced by Megan Clewes, the Ministry Experience Scheme worker in the Avonside Mission Area.



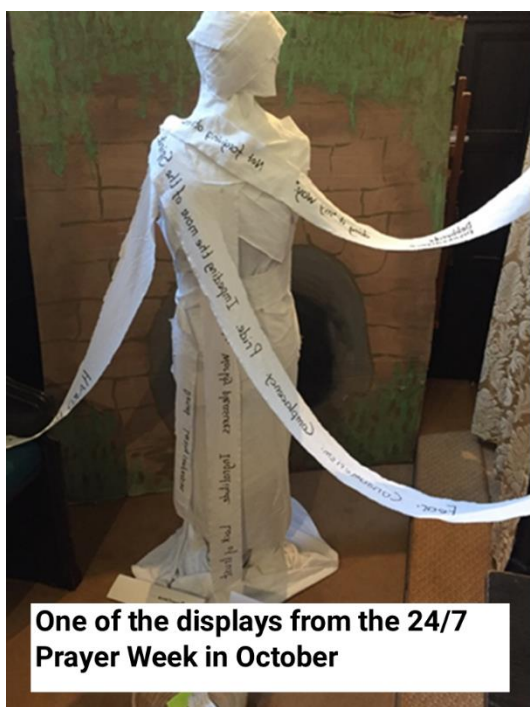
Autumn 2021 saw some groups following the Getting on Well course which accompanied both our Sunday series and the Living in Love and Faith course on identity, relationships, and marriage. Brian and Bev Richardson's group took the opportunity in the Autumn Term to follow the Alpha course, which was greatly appreciated by its members and guests who attended the course. Our small groups continue to be one of the primary ways in which we grow in faith as individuals and as a community, and share our pastoral concerns and needs.

The value of these small communities was particularly evident in the care they showed to their members during lockdown. Whilst some of our groups have met even more regularly than usual in 2021 in response to its challenges, many congregation members have found that the lockdowns have led them to adopt different patterns of how to sustain and encourage their Christian faith and discipleship. This has sometimes led to a less consistent pattern of small group/service attendance and some people have remarked on the impact they have noticed this has had on their personal faith in 2021. If you would be interested in joining a group, please talk to Simon Potter.

Prayer

Prayer is at the heart of who we are and what we do as a church. So many members of St Mary's are faithful prayer warriors, praying often in their own time and coming together with others regularly to do so. Morning prayer meetings happen daily (except Fridays and Sundays), usually in the James Chapel (Saturdays on Zoom). All are welcome to join in with this rhythm of prayer.

The Prayer Ministry team, led by Angela Cattell, continued to meet monthly throughout the year to pray for the needs of individuals. Prayer ministry at Sunday services wasn't possible during 2021 due to the Covid restrictions, but this has been recently reintroduced. In addition, monthly prayer diaries for St Mary's and ASMA are produced and shared with the church family to fuel people's prayer at home. During 2021 news and prayer needs from our Mission Partners were regularly shared via the weekly emails.



One of the displays from the 24/7 Prayer Week in October

In October the annual 24/7 Prayer Week took place, with this year's theme being 'Be Released – Set free from Bondage'. Eighty people took part to provide a continuum of hourly slots aiming to listen to God through prayer and contemplation, either in the James Chapel or at home.

Angela writes: *Many people found the week to be a helpful time and testified to having heard God speak to them. Members of the prayer team used their creative skills to produce a model representing Lazarus being summoned from the grave by Jesus's command to "Come out!" (John 11:43). This symbolised the powerful work of Jesus which encourages us to be released from*

our fears and walk towards the light. Our prayers and reflections inspired us to be bold and to share our faith with those whom God sends across our path. Above all there was a sense of God wanting to draw intimately close to us and enjoy and adore Him as we give Him our whole hearted love.

Staying connected as a church family

It's really important for churches to make socialising together a priority, as it's often through these special events that people can get to know each other and begin to build relationships. Like 2020, this year continued to be a tricky time for larger gatherings.



Joining together online as a church family for worship, teaching and fun!

In March we held a **Church Weekend at Home ONLINE**. It wasn't ideal, but it was better than nothing! We enjoyed morning seminars, including one for children and young people(!) and encouraged everyone to get outdoors in the afternoon and take part in a photo quiz around the parish. In the evening there was a church family

quiz on Zoom, and then one single online service the following day.

Thursday Lunch, which appeals mainly to the older members of our community, ran throughout most of the year when allowed. Hats off to the team who run this wonderful activity for their resilience and flexibility in response to the ever-changing restrictions. This community ended the year as usual with their wonderful Christmas lunch.

During 2021 the filming of **Pilgrim's Progress** continued in earnest and by the end of the year it was in its final stages of editing. Well done to Keith Sheather and everyone involved with this brilliant project.



Beer and Carols returned in 2021 and around 100 people came to this outreach event. Members of the church, led by Chris Thomas, worked hard to offer something fun and relaxed, but in a Covid-safe way – not an easy task! The end result was well appreciated by all who came.



The Friday and Sunday church family emails continued throughout the year and feedback indicates that they provide a helpful way for many to feel meaningfully connected to the church and informed about what is happening. Usually the emails are written by Jema or Simon and are prepared each week in the church office by Carrie. Church Matters, the weekly news sheet continues to be available in paper form for the small number of church members who do not have email access.

Give thanks for: All the socialising that was possible in 2021 despite the restrictions.

Please pray: For those who feel lonely when they come to church – that we would all go the extra mile to include people who come on their own.

Connecting with the parish and beyond

AVONSIDE MISSION AREA

Avonmouth - Lawrence Weston - Sea Mills - Shirehampton - Stoke Bishop

Avonside Mission Area (ASMA) in 2021

In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul describes to the churches of a first-century mission area what life as a follower of Jesus, in the Spirit of God looks like. He says, ***serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."*** (Gal 5:13-14)

As brothers and sisters in Christ, the leaders, teams and congregations of the ASMA churches have sought over the last year, more than ever, to begin our shared conversations and activities with the question, ***how can we serve you?***

We've asked this question of our **local communities** and, as we have done so, have found that our Mission Area-wide **mental health/Kintsugi Hope groups** have expanded in both number and geographical spread. At St Andrew's Avonmouth, the Foodbank and Homebank were joined in 2021 by **Space4Makers** - a community workshop space offering training for young people and those looking to acquire new practical skills. A new community cafe - **The Well** - also began offering weekly refreshments, lunches, a listening ear, and faith discussion opportunities to the community and clients of the Social Justice Hub. This hub, and the Mental Health Awareness groups, have been staffed and served by



volunteers from across NW Bristol and the ASMA churches.

We've also asked the question, 'how can we serve you?' of our **church congregations**. In 2021, there were plenty of opportunities for ASMA to support the team, mission and ministry of St Mary's, Shirehampton as the church entered a season of vacancy. It has largely been clergy from the Mission Area (especially Stoke Bishop) who have assisted the team in Shirehampton in maintaining the pattern of Sunday and midweek services, as well as funeral, baptism, and wedding ministry. The Mission Area network has also resourced and encouraged pastoral and teaching ministry in other ways too – a shared Ash Wednesday service on Zoom; the **Come To Life 2021 ASMA Lent Course** looked at issues of creation care; the **2021 ASMA Living In Love and Faith course** was the largest course of its type in the Diocese and set the pattern for several other areas to follow; and the **Getting On Well sermon/small group teaching series** that accompanied it has since been offered at St Mary's Stoke Bishop, St Andrew's Avonmouth, and St Peter's Lawrence Weston; and shared Alpha and marriage

preparation courses. Some churches in the Mission Area have also enjoyed sharing a **sermon series in Revelation** together. Church members appreciated the chance to gather for the first in-person **ASMA Prayer Celebration** since lockdown in December 2021, and this has been accompanied by monthly prayer gatherings - **Harp and Bowl** - at St Edyth's and St Andrew's.

The question, 'how can we serve you?' has also been asked by our **staff teams**. Plenty of the work involved in running our churches is not up-front. Whether it's the encouragement of **networking our children's and youth workers to share ideas and training; or sharing people with financial expertise; or sharing safeguarding personnel and training; or shared mental health first-aid training; or sharing HR support to enable our staff and teams to thrive**, this has all been quietly happening behind-the-scenes in 2021, meaning that ASMA is considered, by both the Diocese and Trinity College, to be a key partner in the training and

Give thanks for: The partnership and friendship that exists across the ASMA churches.

Please pray: For every church member to invest in the Mission Area, serving not only their own church but the other churches and communities too.

development of lay and ordained leaders. The Mission Area approach to resourcing mission and ministry has been considered a pioneering project success by the Diocese in 2021 as it has considered the Transforming Church agenda, looking ahead to the next five years.

2022 is bringing further opportunities and developments but the question, 'how can we serve you?' will remain a key question for each member of each church in the Mission Area in each generation.

Hazelnut Community Farm (HCF) www.hazelnutcommunityfarm.com

In 2018 Rev John White began his Pioneer Curacy at St Mary's. He spent two years learning from people locally and investing in our church. During 2020



John's emphasis shifted away from St Mary's and HCF came into being. **Hazelnut is a new church which seeks to do things differently. In essence HCF wants to help people encounter God, forming communities where care for creation and compassion for the poor is at the heart of their shared life together.**

June 2021 marked the start of John's fourth year of curacy, and over the year HCF has gone from strength to strength, as well as facing some challenges.

John writes: It's definitely been a year of growth! As a community **we have continued to grow in our worship** as we encounter Christ as Creator in creation. It has been a joy to celebrate special times together, like Harvest, Christingle, Candlemas and Easter.

There's been **growth in numbers**, and we're now a community of around 40 with a weekly average attendance of 25. A key part of this growth has been from people resettling in the UK from Hong Kong. They have been a blessing to our community. **We**



have also continued to grow fruit and vegetables over two sites (Lockleaze and Horfield) as a central part of our shared life together. Much of the produce is given away and this has been a way to connect with people locally and to talk more together about climate emergency we are all facing.

We have also been **growing through our Potting Shed initiative** which is training groups of Christians from across the UK to start growing projects which share some of the essential HCF characteristics. We have had 20 groups go through the five month course. Many of these will join our network of growing projects. When added to our current numbers we are estimating that Hazelnut will be a network of 20 growing projects by the end of this month. We also hosted our first **Sustaining Church conference** in 2021, which was really well attended. It's happening again in July - visit our website for more info.

There has been **growth in some of our structures too**. We now have a board of trustees, we're a registered charity and financially independent of St Mary's. Some other pioneers in training (from Trinity College and elsewhere) have been supporting HCF and learning alongside me over the year too.

We have also been blessed by the Diocese of Bristol and are in the final stages of receiving a Bishop's Mission Order which means we will be an officially recognised church within the diocese. My role as leader has also been funded for the coming year (until the summer of 2023) and this could be extended further.

On 19th June 2022 St Mary's will be celebrating with John and the HCF community at a special service at 10.30am on their site at Eden Grove Methodist Church. This will mark the end of John's time with St Mary's as curate and will be the start of our partnership with HCF as one of our Mission Partners. It would be great to have lots of people join in with this celebration.

Give thanks for: All that God has done through HCF this year!
Please pray: For increased financial support so that a part time Youth Worker and Operations Director can be appointed to support John in the leadership of HCF. Pray too that they will be able to continue to use their Horfield site long term.

The Messenger Magazine

Through the quarterly Messenger Magazine delivered to every home in our parish we continue to aim to make God known, to be a vehicle of good news and *the Good News*, and to serve our church and community through a balance of articles to interest and attract a wide readership. In addition to the four usual editions, we also produced Easter and Christmas cards for everyone in the parish (a lot of extra delivering!) in order to advertise the arrangements for festival services. The changing Covid rules meant that it was harder to predict a long time in advance what could be offered!



We often have positive comments from members of the community, who value the Messenger as a community-building tool, and who also appreciate the more spiritual articles. Copies sometimes go further afield to be enjoyed.

The Messenger team is large, composed of many valued foot soldiers (distributors), two advertising managers, writers, and an editorial team of six who are all gifted and dedicated. **The team routinely meet to review the past Messenger and prayerfully generate ideas for the next. It always delights (and surprises!) us in the way it comes together each time under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

Advertising defrays some of our costs, but the Messenger is subsidised by the Church as a cost-effective means of outreach. The Messenger communicates the church to the parish and publicises events and seasonal services. This has continued to be a very creative year. As ever, we would welcome more distributors to replace those who are no longer able to do this task and please encourage any budding (under 50s) journalists to join us.

Special thanks to Hazel Trapnell and Gillian Baxter for their oversight of this important area of ministry, and thanks for a dedicated team of journalists and copy editors, saying good-bye to Sue Hook on the editorial team and Jim Currie on advertising, welcoming Vivienne Francois.

Give thanks for: All who have connected with God in any way during 2021 as a result of reading articles in The Messenger.

Please pray: For others (from the 10.30 congregation particularly) within St Mary's to offer their skills and time to support this important part of our ministry.

Student ministry (North Village Campus)

In response to the suggestion that prayer was needed on the North Village University campus, an ecumenical prayer team of eight people was set up in the Wills Chapel.



Angela Cattell and Annabel Stott have been the St Mary's lead representatives in this area ministry during 2021. **For nearly two years the Chapel has been opened every Wednesday afternoon for an event called "Oasis", sanctioned by the Senior Team Leader for the wellbeing of students at the University, and offering a space for students to chat, reflect, or pray.** Students have visited each week to share

stories and ask questions and, during lockdown restrictions, an outdoor picnic on the grass outside the chapel was well attended. A successful Carol Service was held in December.

The fruit of this ministry is already being seen in individual lives. Freshers arrive each October and some who move on to other accommodation have become influencers to others and have joined different churches.

St Mary's is in close proximity to the six student halls of North Village with around 2000 students onsite during term time. **It would be an answer to prayer if we were able to grow the team and offer further hospitality as we continue in this ministry to students.**

Give thanks for: The faithful perseverance of those who have given considerable time and energy to this ministry.

Please pray: That students would come to faith in Jesus over the coming year.

Supporting our Mission Partners

It is a great blessing to support Mission Partners locally and overseas. It is part of our worship, and central to our core purpose as a church. As far as possible we aim to have a relationship with all the charities we support. In some cases, this is through an individual person and in other cases we have a more general relationship with the charity as a whole. **Our support for Mission Partners is always**



intended to be prayerful and practical. Sometimes practical support looks like a bank transfer of funds. Other times it looks like tins and packets of food, or hours spent volunteering. Throughout 2021 we have regularly highlighted the work of our Mission Partners through the Church Family emails, which has improved the overall 'exposure' to the wider church family, hopefully increasing awareness and prayer.



Some significant decisions in relation to our Mission Partners were taken during 2021. The PCC re-formed the Mission Committee (a sub-committee of the PCC), chaired by Caroline Jowett-Ive. This committee led the church through the process of voting which Mission Partners to support over the coming three years (2022-25). 100 people voted and the new list of Mission Partners is below.

Romans and Tabitha

Ministering in Uganda, running a school and supporting those in poverty.

One25

Bristol based charity supporting vulnerable women caught up in the sex trade.

Open Doors

Supporting and advocating for persecuted Christians worldwide.

Joseph Bilal

An influential leader in South Sudan, working at the Christian University in Juba.

Trinity Theological College

Our local theological college, which also trains ordinands

Hazelnut Community Farm

A new church planted by John White (Pioneer Curate)

Unseen

A charity working in Bristol and other cities seeking to end modern slavery.

Christians Against Poverty

Nationwide charity offering debt support to those in poverty.

Encounter Christianity

A Bristol-based charity providing high-quality RE input for local schools.

Avonmouth Social Justice Hub & Foodbank

Supporting the poorest people in our local area.

Lucy Monk

A minister with the charity Interserve, working in central Asia

inHope & Sisters of the Church

Bristol based charities offering practical support for the poorest in our city.

The figures in the red box summarise our Mission Giving during 2021.

Another key change during 2021 was in relation to the Mission Gift Day. The special appeal for our Mission Partners which took place in the summer will not be repeated next year, and instead the PCC have agreed that a proportion of the church's regular planned income will be donated to our Mission Partners from 2022 onwards.

There will still be special collections from time to time. The aim of this new approach is to move towards the biblical principle of tithing (giving away at least 10% of) the church's planned income.

Malcolm Pritchard (CMS)	£3,000
inHope	£2,400
Joseph Bilal	£1,500
Romans and Tabitha (OAC)	£1,500
Lucy Monk (Interserve)	£1,500
Kitgum Diocese (Tearfund)	£1,500
Open Doors	£1,400
Sisters of the Church	£700
Trinity College	£500

This will mean that everyone who gives towards St Mary's is contributing substantially to our support for Mission Partners, rather than having a relatively small number of people (those who respond to the Mission Partners Gift Day) contributing a large percentage of the total gifts.

During the year we enjoyed visits from Lucy Monk and Joseph Bilal who were able to share about their work at church services, and also representatives from inHope, Bristol NW Foodbank and the Bristol International Student Centre.

We also support **Traidcraft** (suppliers of FairTrade goods) by holding a monthly stall after the Sunday services. For some of the year this wasn't possible, but we resumed the stall as soon as we could, following appropriate risk assessments.

Give thanks for: The changes that have been made over the last year. Pray that this new approach leads to St Mary's being even more generous as a church over time.

Please pray: For all our Mission Partners, especially those facing adversity. Pray that they would know the power of Jesus at work in their lives and through their ministries.

Resourcing Mission

Our office team

Carrie Patterson and Rachel Sandford are often the first port of call for people making contact with St Mary's via our office. **We are enormously blessed to have such committed, hard-working and gracious members of our team to use their administrative gifts for God's glory.** Amongst many other things, Rachel does a fantastic job of handling the bookings and responding graciously to hall and church users. She also keeps our website up to date and manages our social media presence. Carrie's role involves a lot of liaising with contractors and sorting out the often-complex building-related issues. She does a great job of handling our communications, printed and electronic and is also the line manager of Rachel and Lucy.



Another aspect of Carrie's role is to be the Eco-Rep, maintaining a good dialogue with the Diocese as we seek to make wise decisions and choices. Throughout the year we have made lots of small changes, which all add up, in terms of the things we buy – choosing eco-friendly options as far as possible, and seeking to use less paper and consumables. This has been a whole-church effort, but has particularly involved those who lead the various areas of ministry. There will always be more we can do, but eco issues are certainly on the agenda.



Lucy Allen looks after our facilities and keeps the church and hall clean and tidy. This is a hugely valuable role, often unseen and unsung, but would be quickly noticed if it wasn't being done! Gina and Stephanie also freely give their time to support the church office. Gina helps to prepare the slides for the Sunday services week by week, and Stephanie is often called upon to use her design skills to create some of the posters and flyers which are displayed on the noticeboards.

During much of 2021 it wasn't possible to have many people helping out in the office, but **there are always things that can be done by others, so if you've got some time to spare and would like to lend a hand, do talk to Carrie about how you could be involved.**

Our building

A space for the community

We are enormously blessed to have such a versatile space for worship and community activity in the form of our church and halls. Throughout the whole of 2021 **the church building has been open virtually every day** for people to use the space for private prayer and reflection. Regularly people tell me how much they appreciate the oasis of quiet and peace. People travel considerable distances across the city to enjoy the benefits of our open church, and people have been encountering God, and His love in action through church members when they make their way into the building.

Little by little **evangelistic books and resources are taken**, presumably by people who genuinely want to read them. The church has also regularly been **a place of sanctuary** for at least one person who has no fixed abode. This strikes me to be a very Jesus-shaped way of using this amazing resource we have been entrusted with to bless others.

Increasingly we have regular church activities happening in the church itself, as well as in our halls. With people still cautious about meeting up in houses the airy space the church offered was really appreciated for the Emotional Wellbeing, Bereavement and Bible Meditation Groups, for example. Both Bristol Diocese and Trinity College have had free use of the church for some of their training needs and it has been good to be able to support this.

At the end of the summer, we also took charge of a wonderful grand piano, which belongs to a local musician who is now using the church as a venue for their piano teaching. The piano can be used in our church services and we have already benefitted greatly from this arrangement.

There's no doubt that **St Mary's church and halls are an important community venue**. During 2021 the hall bookings picked up considerably and are now back to pre-pandemic levels. There's a wonderful mix of activities and ages and we took on a few new regular bookings alongside welcoming back our regulars mostly from the autumn. From children's dance classes to U3A art appreciation, Pilates, bible study groups, residents' and charity group meetings, weekend parties and language classes the church rooms buzz with activity throughout the week. By midway through the year, local Rainbows, Brownies and Guide groups were able to meet here two evenings a week in term time and we also have occasional bookings such as opera rehearsals. The three concerts which were due to take place sadly had to cancel but are now in the diary for 2022. Frequently the halls are used for parties and other lively gatherings, adding weight to the need to move forwards with the redevelopment of this space so that it is user-friendly and welcoming for everyone.

Repair and maintenance

Routine maintenance and repairs to the church buildings are overseen by Carrie Patterson and Peter Robottom and are ultimately the responsibility of the Churchwardens and Vicar. The Buildings Committee are a sub-committee of the PCC who support this area of ministry. Every few years someone from the diocese visits to help identify what works need to be addressed (this is called the Quinquennial Survey).

2021 was primarily one of preparation with many problems investigated, permissions sought and also work contracted for but most actions were actually achieved this year. The **high-level roof repairs** identified in the Quinquennial survey and repair to a column high on the tower referred to in the last report were completed in April. We were also thankful that other work identified in the survey such as **gutter clearance and low-level painting** were taken forward at the Church Family Volunteering Weekend in September - a really positive time bringing all ages together to paint, clean and garden.



Investigations into the remaining lighting defects and the problems with AV output in front of the James Chapel did not produce cost effective solutions and this work is ongoing, as is exploration of solutions to the **persistent stopping of the church clock**.



An Archdeacon's certificate had to be obtained for the **installation of a defibrillator** that had been suggested by a community enabler. The process was lengthy and difficult with the Diocesan Advisory Committee and Planning regulations requiring location in the Hulbert Room porch rather than on the Narthex and then conditions were imposed that could not be met. The final go-ahead was issued in

November. We are very thankful to Simon Brookes, for setting up the crowdfunding campaign to cover the installation costs met and some help towards the ongoing energy and maintenance costs.

Investigations were set in hand towards **the replacement of the 20 year-old main church boiler**. Discussion about the different options continues with Diocesan advisers on eco solutions, which are proving complex and time-consuming.

Further investigations by Chris Thomas and the church architect, Quentin Alder, established **damage to the valley gutter behind the tower** leading to the damp around the entrance. This work was completed early in 2022, as was the work to **restore hot water to the servery in church**.



The largest issue was over the **Redwood tree** in the car park. After concern from a neighbour, advice was sought from Bartlett Tree Experts but despite application of nutrients and frequent watering over several months by the office staff, it sadly died and quotations were sought from a number of Tree Surgeons for its removal and other tree works. The best quote came from Gordano Tree Care. They obtained all necessary consents from the City Council, and the work has recently taken place. We are grateful to a parishioner, Peter White, in offering a donation in memory of his brother to cover the substantial cost of felling the tree.

We would particularly like to thank Richard Elderton who again has undertaken a variety works with great skill and Chris Thomas who has also provided his expertise in resolving issues. In the churchyard, David Swithinbank, Shan Stock, Katy Dyer and Sue and David Hook continued to keep the churchyard in an attractive condition as well as working to make it more eco-friendly. We could always do with more volunteer helpers!

Redeveloping the Church Rooms

Considerable progress was made during 2021 towards the redevelopment project, though much of it was unseen by the majority of the church family. At virtually every PCC meeting through the year there has been something to discuss or decide, particularly in relation to how the project is funded.

We secured a grant in December from Bristol City Council for £25,000 towards the project, following the hard work of Peter and Carrie in pursuing this. Other grants are also being explored.

All of this led to the recent re-launch of the project (in March 2022) with the invitation for the congregation to make pledges so that work can begin next month prior to the expiration of the planning permission.

Give thanks for: The gifts of money, skills and time given by many people which have meant that we have been able to care for our buildings during 2021.

Please pray: For other church members with skills and time to come forwards to support those who are doing a lot

Our PCC

By the end of 2021 the PCC membership was as follows:

Eleven Elected members

Julia Gwyther

Andy Judd

Al Meadows*

Caroline Owen *Treasurer & Safeguarding Officer*

Kate Pinfold*

Nick Powlesland*

Brian Richardson**

Peter Robottom**

Jerry Sandford

Caroline Simpson

Tony Yeadon

Vacancy

Three Deanery Synod Reps

Jo Bridgwater

Hayley Brydges

Tony Hughes

Vacancy

Ex-officio members *able to attend and vote due to their role within the church*

Jema Ball *PCC Chair*

Angela Cattell

Jennifer Hall

Caroline Jowett-Ive *Churchwarden*

Jo Morris

Simon Potter

Ann Thomas *Churchwarden*

Hazel Trapnell

Non-voting member

Steve Fairbairn *PCC Secretary*

Individuals highlighted green are also members of Leadership Team (Standing Committee). Rachel Powlesland is not on the PCC but is a member of the Leadership Team.

There were six PCC meetings during 2021. You can find a record of PCC meeting minutes on the church website. At different points during the year following people stepped down from the PCC: Justin Stratis, Miles Kitching, Ben Notley,

Give thanks for: All those who serve (or have served) on the PCC, for their wisdom and willingness to help lead the church in this vital way.

Please pray: That the PCC would continue to be a place where wise decisions are made, in order to further the mission of the church.

Pauline Person, Jenny Baker, Wendy Hughes, John White (ex-officio) and Yvonne Penn (ex-officio). Thanks to them all for their service over the years.

Individuals marked with an * above were newly appointed to the PCC in 2021. Brian Richardson and Peter Robottom were previously ex-officio members, but are now elected members. Carrie Patterson was elected as Electoral Roll Secretary at the APCM in May 2021.

When joining the PCC new members are reminded that the PCC exists to:

- Enable the church to play its part in God's mission to his world.
- Co-operate with the minister in sharing leadership.
- Ensure legal compliance with charity law and ecclesiastical law, in particular in the areas of finance, employment and appointments.
- Care for the buildings and churchyard so that they may be best suited for the purpose of the church's ministry and mission.
- Be a channel of consultation within the wider Church through its synodical structures on matters that affect the Church locally and nationally.

PCC members are expected to commit to:

- Pray for the church, its leaders and about the matters raised at meetings.
- Attend meetings and prepare well.
- Contribute in meetings, asking challenging questions where needed.
- Share and demonstrate the values of the church and PCC.
- Be connected to the life of St Mary's church.

We are blessed with a strong PCC who are representative of our congregation in terms of gender and age. We are keen to ensure that the PCC is a diverse group as this will help to bring fruitful diversity within the church as a whole. If you are interested in serving as part of the PCC, please speak to the Vicar.

One of the roles of the PCC is to ensure that the **Electoral Roll** is kept up to date. This is a list of those who have opted to be part of the 'membership' of the church, and who are entitled to vote at the APCM.

At the 2021 APCM the number of people on the roll was 251. The **new total (April 2022) is 244, with the changes being due to people who have died or moved away.** The number on the roll will have increased by the time the APCM takes place due to newer church members having opted to join the roll since it went on display. There have been encouraging numbers of people joining the church over the last year.

Our finances

We continue to be incredibly blessed by all at St Mary's who give regularly to enable us to fulfil our mission of *following Jesus and making Him known*. Christians are called by God to give generously and sacrificially. What this looks like in real terms will of course differ hugely between individuals. **We all need to regularly be seeking God's will in terms of how we use the financial resources that He has given us.** Stewardship is the word we use to describe this ongoing reflective process that we engage with as individuals and as a church.

Giving to St Mary's during 2021

Our Treasurer, Caroline Owen writes: Many people at St Mary's already give regularly to the church in a planned way. Some do this through Standing Order, but now 60% of planned giving is directed through the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) which provides a simplified and quicker way of recovering the Gift Aid,



Tony Hughes, Giving Officer

making the process easier for those who handle the St Mary's finances. The PGS has improved considerably which means that it is now easier to channel your giving to St Mary's through this Church of England website. **To find out more about how to join the PGS please visit the Giving Page on the church website or speak to Tony Hughes, our Giving Officer.**

Planned giving exceeded the budget for the year and even though the church was closed for gathered worship for the early part of the year our congregation continued to support the work of the church in Stoke

Bishop, this demonstrates how important it is that we are not reliant on cash collections.

Cash collections at services have not been reintroduced but during 2021 we have made it possible for people to make a donation to the church via our website using a Debit/Credit card, and have purchased a contactless giving machine (which was set up in church in April 2022).

The reduction in income during some of 2021 was matched with a fall in some areas of expenditure. The major area was a saving in salaries as we were able to continue to take advantage of the Government job retention scheme and recover some salary costs (of the Worship Leader). In recognition of the work already being carried out by our Children and Families Minister, the PCC agreed to increase this to a full-time post in May 2021.

We ran our annual Stewardship Appeal in November which included targeted communications mainly via email, a well-designed information sheet and a video encouraging people to respond. It is not always straightforward to determine the exact response to the Stewardship Appeal, but there were one-off gifts totaling approx £24,500 and an increase in planned giving of around £6,000 per year, including several new donors.

Financial income and expenditure

The annual accounts required by law are contained in a separate document which is available on request. The figures below summarise the main sources of income and the expenditure incurred in the years to 31 December 2020 and 2021 and the budgets for 2021 and 2022.

	2020	2021	2021	2022
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Planned Giving	205,624	224,178	211,200	228,000
Other donations	81,349	33,796	9,000	26,750
Church and hall rental	2,816	8,420	1,800	13,000
Rent from St Laud's Close	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400
Other income	3,025	6,502	3,120	5,220
Total income	241,787	284,296	236,520	284,370
Expenditure				
Parish Share	160,980	160,980	160,980	165,000
Employment costs	69,444	88,054	87,570	91,948
Lighting and heating	11,053	11,895	11,033	11,935
Repairs	4,732	8,112	6,000	6,000
Office costs	6,709	9,166	6,900	8,460
Youth, Children and Families ministry	1,659	1,969	2,640	2,390
Other expenditure	21,189	23,215	25,167	21,325
Total expenditure	275,766	303,391	300,290	307,058
(Deficit)/surplus for the year	28,448	(19,095)	(63,770)	(22,688)

Give thanks for: All who give to St Mary's to resource the mission of the church.

Please pray: That the projected deficit this year will be met and that we would continue to make wise decisions about how to use the money God has blessed us with.

Safeguarding

Caroline Owen is our Safeguarding Officer and our first contact for all concerns about children (under 18's) or vulnerable adults. You can email safeguarding@stmarysb.org.uk or find Caroline's phone number on ChurchSuite.



Caroline writes:



On one of the training courses undertaken in the year we were encouraged to reflect on Psalm 91, which has become known in some circles as the 'safeguarding psalm'. Verse 11 says: *For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.* This is the stimulus I need whenever I feel jaded in my role as Parish Safeguarding Officer. I would encourage everyone to read the psalm and reflect on the ways that God is our protector.

2021 has been a quiet year in some respects, but this means that many of us have had the time to undertake training. The courses organised by the Diocese are useful and I am really pleased that most of the PCC members have completed the two basic Safeguarding training courses. The courses are available to everyone regardless as to whether you have a specific role in the church. The more people who are aware of safeguarding issues, the safer our church is for our young people and children and for vulnerable adults.

As a parent, I was always happy to let my (now adult) children attend church events on their own. It was an important part of their growing up to be able to spend time away from parents. I felt confident that they were safe because I knew at St Mary's we took safeguarding seriously. Our policy document is reviewed annually and approved by the PCC. Safeguarding is on the agenda as a standing item at all PCC and leadership meetings. Our policy is linked to the website and is on the notice board. Our children youth and pastoral workers and volunteers are required to take part in regular training. I periodically attend planning meetings for youth and children's events to ensure the safety of our young people.

It is our collective responsibility to:

- Be aware of the possibility of abuse;
- Respect boundaries when we are asked to; and
- Express any concerns you may have to me either face to face or by using my dedicated e mail address safeguarding@stmarysb.org.uk

I am always happy to talk to anyone who has concerns. I cannot do the job alone and I need everyone to be alert to potentially risky situations.

A note from the Vicar

Much of what the Safeguarding Officer does is unseen, and of course all safeguarding concerns are treated with strict confidentiality. In light of that, most people will not realise the work that Caroline does behind the scenes in this role. I am enormously grateful to her for the wisdom she brings to this, and for her pragmatic approach.

Give thanks for: Caroline's service in this area and all who work to ensure that our Safeguarding Policy is adhered to.

Please pray: For all those who are suffering as a result of abuse of any kind, that St Mary's will be a place where they feel safe and understood.



Deanery Synod

What is a Deanery Synod?

Deaneries are small geographical divisions of the Diocese, within which parishes are grouped under the care of an Area Dean. Each deanery is governed by a Deanery Synod. Our Deanery is Bristol West, and the Area Dean (minister with oversight for the Deanery is Fr Charles Sutton (Vicar of All Saints Clifton).

The Deanery Synod is a statutory body, and there is one per deanery, each consisting, in the main, of the clergy of the deanery; the lay parochial representatives elected at the APCM's of each parish in the deanery, and ex-officio (General and Diocesan Synod) members. The number of elected members from each parish on Deanery Synod varies depending on the size of each church/parish. At St Mary's during 2021 we had three elected members (Jo Bridgwater, Hayley Brydges and Tony Hughes), one vacant elected space, one ex-officio member (Peter Robottom) in addition to all the clergy from St Mary's.

Deanery Synods potentially have a significant role to play. They are located between PCCs at parish level and the higher synodical levels of the Diocese and nationally (General Synod).

The purpose of a Deanery Synod is to:

- Be a channel through which national Church of England initiatives and rulings and matters relating to the diocese are put into practice in parishes.
- Be a way through which a collection of parishes can express their opinion on matters of religious or public interest through making proposals to Diocesan Synod or General Synod.
- Bring together the views of parishes on common problems and to formulate common policies on those problems
- Foster a sense of community and interdependence among the parishes in the Deanery, promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Bristol West Deanery Synod Report

Over the course of the year there continued to be a good deal of learning from the disruptions of the pandemic which churches have put into practice. However, there were also a number of negative impacts that we are slowly coming to terms with, such as reduced numbers attending church, a continuing sense of anxiety and reluctance to engage, reduced levels of income (both giving and rental/fee), reluctance to volunteer and feelings of impatience and frustration as the duration of impact lengthens.

A summary of the main topics covered at the Deanery Synods in 2021

May 2021 – A focus on Inclusion and Representation

To what extent are churches locally truly 'inclusive', or are they open to others with the expectation that, over time, they increasingly conform to established norms?

October 2021 – A focus on the new Diocesan strategy - Transforming Church

Archdeacon Neil Warwick explained that Transforming Church is the process by which the Diocese has refreshed its vision through a diocesan-wide listening exercise. Particular effort had been made to listen to those not normally heard, including disabled people, BAME people, LGBTBI+ people and young people. An external consultancy assisted in examining the results of this engagement. The values which have been identified in this process – together with associated behaviours, experience principles and benefits to our community – are as follows:

- **Openness:** We are loving and open to all, welcoming to everyone, embracing diverse needs, so that we have a long-term relationship with our community, based on acceptance and love for people as God made them.
- **Generosity:** We receive and give sincerely, giving our time and resources to share what we know of Jesus' love, caring for people practically and spiritually, so that members of our community experience God's love and have the opportunity to journey into faith if they so choose.
- **Creativity:** We co-operate with the work of the Spirit, being rooted in faith and responsive to the Spirit, in bold and joyful faith, work and worship, so that we have variety in our projects and worship styles, celebrating tradition and innovation to connect with God.
- **Bravery:** We are courageous with our voices and our actions, acknowledging and learning from our past and actively effecting positive change in the world, so that we are listened to and partnered with, and the collective voices and actions of our community help to bring about transformational change.

The Uganda Link

The essential platform for this is 'building relationships of wholeness across culture with Christ at the center'. In short this is about 'relationship'; between Christians, across cultures, over geography and with, sometimes, differing views of this world. It is about learning from each other and providing mutual support. The Uganda Link is a feature of every Synod and the working life of our parishes in the Deanery.

Give thanks for: The structures which enable churches to work together.

Please pray: That Bristol West Deanery Synod would continue to be a positive voice for change and renewal within the diocese.

Fr Charles Sutton, Area Dean for Bristol West Deanery



st Mary's
STOKE BISHOP

following Jesus and making Him known

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