

St Mary's Church, Houghton with Wyton

Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council

for the year ended 31 March 2025 (report)
and 31 December 2024 (finances)

Chair

The Reverend Geoffrey Boucher
The Rectory, Rectory Lane
Wyton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Bank

Lloyds Bank plc
99 High Street
Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Independent examiner

Ray King Underwood
46 Victoria Crescent
Houghton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Background

St Mary's PCC has responsibility for supporting the Rector in promoting the ecclesiastical & municipal church, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance and redevelopment responsibilities for the Church buildings, although up-keep of two churchyards, St Mary's & Wyton (near to the closed Church) and the Council are responsible for both but the war Graves Commission also look after part of the latter. To our financial advantage, church members kindly carry out this vital maintenance work.

The full PCC has met six times since the last AGM. The various Committees have gathered between the PCC meetings and reports of their work and achievements have been received and discussed by the PCC at their meetings.

Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation rules.

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

The Rector	The Reverend Geoffrey Boucher	Chair
Church Wardens	Mr Guy Morton	Church Warden
	Mr Mike Batchelor	Church Warden
Deputy Church Warden	Position Vacant	
Deanery Synod	Mr Matthew Challis	(ex-officio)
	Position Vacant	
Elected Members	Mr Simon Summers	Treasurer
	Mrs Patricia Hawitt Palmer	Secretary
	Mr Mike Batchelor	
	Mr Roger Churchill	
	Mrs Sarah Holden	
	Mrs Debbie Hollis	
	Mrs Liz Lee	
	Mrs Pam Longland	
	Mr Guy Morton	
	Mrs Jenny Thompson	

Committees

The PCC operates through a number of Committees, which meet between full meetings of the PCC, and on an ad-hoc basis wherever there is a need to transact specific relevant business.

Standing Committee

This is the only Committee required by law and has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the full Council. It has met once since the 2024 AGM.

Report of the Fabric Committee – *Mike Batchelor*

St Mary the Virgin Church

The majority of effort has been devoted to the preparation for the remodelling work. Working with our Architect, Quantity Surveyor and Structural Engineer, plans and a specification were prepared and circulated to a number of contractors. Brown and Ralph were duly appointed and commenced work on the 20th January 2025.

Prior to the works commencing the existing distribution boards were removed and new ones installed. This was the only project undertaken within the church this year. General maintenance has been carried out throughout the year.

There are a number of projects planned for 2025 other than the remodelling works, namely replacing the existing lighting and heating, a dais at the step between the nave and the chancel, a new door to the south entrance and glass panels to the inner south entrance door, and a speaker to serve the chancel. Damp continues to be a problem both within the body of the church and especially within the bell tower.

St Mary's Centre

No major works have been carried out in this period.

Maintenance to the fire alarm and detection system and fire extinguishers has been carried out during the year together with the replacement of certain light fittings and lamps.

In conjunction with the Parish Council, an energy survey was commissioned and a bid was made to HDC to replace the existing two gas-fired boilers, but this was unsuccessful.

The hot water cylinder was identified as a possible source of Legionella so has not been used and will be disconnected and removed with a replacement system to the sink unit taps installed.

General cleaning has been carried out during the year.

Karen Leigh Anderson has taken over the organisation of the booking system and our thanks go to Gerry Feakes for 38 years he has been involved with the caretaking duties and Booking Clerk role at the Centre.

Progress Report on the St. Mary's Reordering Project – *Roger Churchill*

Construction & Reasoning

The construction of the WC/kitchenette is on target for completion mid-July, with the heating, lighting and carpentry work planned for completion late September 2025.

Reordering is defined as a change to deliverables and a recognition of revised priorities. For these reasons we reviewed the existing and introduced the reordering concept in May 2020, with work commencing in January 2025.

Rector for the Houghton & Wyton Parish

Reverend Geoff Boucher as Rector, is charged with responsibility for full 2000+ persons/parishioners within the Houghton & Wyton parish, not just the 100+ on St Mary's Electoral Roll. The duties of Rector are many but can be described as developing and delivering the Christian faith and fostering a sense of community to all parishioners.

St Mary's for the Parish Community

Currently St Mary's is supported by many groups, schools & organisations. The Reordering Project is an opportunity to further involve the Parish community.

Plan Immediately/Soon

- 1) *Photos/text exhibition of St Mary's many architectural features.*
- 2) *Photo/text exhibition of the archaeology discoveries the churchyard excavation – NB. items 1) & 2) – archaeologist happy to provide a presentation text.*
- 3) *Denny Gaudin's original drawings of the life and times of the young Thomas Garner featured in the book 'Here Comes the Sun' exhibited within St Mary's.*
- 4) *Opportunity to purchase limited run of A3 size prints, signed by Denny.*

Plan Medium Term

- 5) *Following the Black Death 1348, there was mobility of labour, abandonment the feudal system, etc; similarly following Covid 2020, social changes have occurred including working from home, cashless society etc.*
- 6) *Collingwood Farm POW camp is being investigated by H&W History Society – could/should we have exhibitions illustrating local history? – see items 5) & 6) above.*
- 7) *What type of clubs/gathering for St Mary's:*
 - i. *concerts? Country & Western dancing?*
 - ii. *social events (alcohol)?*
 - iii. *craft events? jumble sales?*
- 8) *The Parish community has been generous in providing funds for the current Reordering Project. Should we instigate a 'Friends of St Mary's' facility, whereby parishioners – not necessarily church goers - could support a church directed towards both spiritually and the community.*

Plan Long Term

- 9) *The intention is by promoting an identifiable Parish community, wellbeing, kindness, caring is encouraged within St Mary's which, in turn, leads to a need for spiritual faith!*

Comment

The above comments are very much mine. The AGM seems a perfect place for you to advise what you want of St Mary's today and tomorrow as the Reordering Project nears completion.

Social Committee

No formal Social Committee currently exists, although a few members of the congregation have continued to kindly work on an ad-hoc basis to organise and support several very successful events across the year, for which their input is acknowledged and very much appreciated.

Pastoral & Worship Committee

This Committee, as well as planning church services, undertakes responsibility for overseeing arrangements for children's activities, bible study and prayer groups, in addition to ensuring pastoral care visiting is in place to those who need and benefit from this. As a committee, as well as making arrangements to meet in person wherever possible, several ad-hoc discussions have taken place across the year to ensure plans are in place for regular services, including the smooth transfer of services from the Church to the St Mary's Centre during the reordering works.

The usual festivals, special services and events have taken place since the last AGM including Lent lunch, Feast Week, Lammas, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Day, Christingle and Christmas coffee morning. Donations, once again, to the Harvest Festival were donated to the King's Ripton facility in Huntingdon. The Christmas tree and Easter cross (fashioned from the village Christmas tree) were very well received again this year.

Church Attendance

In accordance with the Church Register, the average attendance at both 8.30am and 9.45am Sunday services around 52, including children under the age of 16.

Report of the Electoral Roll Officer – Debbie Hollis

The number on the Electoral Roll has decreased by eight since last approval, which reflects the confirmed removal of committed and valued congregation members through either families and individuals moving away or the deaths experienced this year as follows:

Names requested for Removal:

Gillian Baker
Joyce Brinkhurst
William Collet
Shirley Holmes
John Illingworth
Alexander Lee
Christopher Lee
Julian Merson
Anthony Rodger
Paul Strickland
Andrew Taylor

There were 3 new additions to join the Electoral Roll for the 2025 AGM, before the stipulated church notice board submission date passed. However, with newer church attendees settling into our congregation there remains potential applications for adjustments during the next church year ahead.

Enrolment forms received by 13th April 2024 cut-off as follows:

Brian Horne
Helen Pilling
Edward Sowell

Therefore, the 2024 Electoral Roll now stands at 77 members (comprising 59 residents of Houghton, Wyton and Wyton-on-the-Hill and 18 non-residents) and is submitted for consideration.

Report on Children's Church (God's Gang) - Liz Lee

We continue with a small group of children from three families and enjoy the time we spend with them as we all learn and grow in our faith.

Using the Scripture Union Mosaic books for small groups, we have spent time learning about David and how he was chosen and guided by God to rescue His people, and through this how God cares for each of us and has plans for us that only He may know, but helps us make the right choices. We also used the seasonal calendar to study events in the church year – Easter, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and Advent / Christmas.

We have now moved on to prayer and how we should pray, learning that God speaks and listens to us.

We had a successful Christmas season with two Christingle services, one for the Houghton Scout Group which was very well attended - and apparently one of the highlights of their year - and the Crib service which was a joy as always, after the Posada journey around the parish and beyond. I am pleased that these were able to be held in church before the re-ordering work began.

I am joined by Wendy King-Underwood and Sarah Holden in leading the sessions, usually in a combination of two of us, which works well.

Thank you to all who give their time and energy to support our work in any way, and if there is anyone who would like to join us in helping the children of our church grow in their faith, either to lead sessions or to provide adult numbers for child safeguarding purposes, or has ideas for new activities, please contact us.

Church Fabric

The fabric of the Church is generally in good order. The fixtures, fittings and ornaments of the Church have been accounted for in accordance with the Terrier.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Treasurer's Report – Simon Summers

1. The overall financial picture shown in the 2024 Annual Accounts is a strong one, with a General Fund surplus of over £10,500 (which the PCC has agreed will be allocated towards the costs of new heating and lighting in Church, hopefully to be installed later this year). Both Giving to our Church and Fees income are reduced from levels achieved in 2023, but most of that is offset by lower Church energy costs.
2. Lower income in one year should not be a concern, especially when fundraising for the Extension Project has gone so well, but we must watch that this does not become a trend.
3. Little has been spent on either of our buildings in 2024, with several necessary Church items now included in the main project.
4. The St Mary's Centre returned to a healthy annual Surplus, largely due to both lower energy costs and increased hiring income. I am most grateful to Gerry Feakes for his diligent administration of the lettings of the St Mary's Centre, over many years.
5. The finances of the Extension Project continue to be satisfactory. We received many generous donations to the Project, which continue in 2025. During 2025 we have also received to date three more refunds of VAT paid, totalling £37,000.
6. The Listed Places of Worship Scheme, which provides these refunds of VAT paid on church building works, will continue in the 2025-26 tax year, but claims will be restricted to £25,000pa per project, an amount which over the coming months I expect us to reclaim in full. Payments to the professional advisers and to the builders Brown and Ralph Ltd are up to date.
7. We have applied for a Grant from the Mick George Community Fund towards the costs of the heating and lighting replacements within the project. Applications closed on March 5th, we are through to the final stage of the process, and we await the outcome.
8. I am very grateful once more for the support of Ray King-Underwood in the production and review of these accounts, and as the Church's Gift Aid Officer.

Review of the Year (Rector's Report)

It is good to pause at the end of the year, breathe and reflect on the blessings of the last twelve months of which there have been many. There has been the familiarity and security of our regular fellowship and offering of worship. And there has been change and the contemplation of change, we have welcomed new faces among us, and we have sent friends on their way with our prayers and love.

We said goodbye to Fr Sam Perez and to Reverend Liz Strickland and we welcomed Reverend Steph Pedlar. We looked to the future as we continued with plans to reorder the church building and bring water to it, install a servery, toilet, lighting, heating and a dais and reading stand. And, we continued to offer our prayers and praises in the here and now, to support one another and those beyond ourselves.

Fr Sam led a group from our two parishes to Spain in April to offer hospitality to pilgrims walking the Camino at a hostel on the route about 50 miles from Santiago de Compostella. It was a blessed and transformative experience for those who travelled and those who prayed and supported at home, and a wonderful climax to Fr Sam's curacy. Sam was already in the process of his own journey to discern where he would move, and we were delighted that he was offered an incumbency in the benefice of Shingay cum Wendy, and many of us joined him for his induction in October.

Just as Sam was preparing to move to his next post, Steph completed her theological training and came to join us. It was a delight for me to be at Steph's ordination as deacon in June and we look forward to all of us being at Ely Cathedral in June 2025 when Steph is ordained priest. Steph's many gifts and rich experience are already blessing us – her living faith in Jesus and excitement about prayer, her creativity and imagination, and her grounding in lived experience.

We are fortunate in having a variety of worship leaders, preachers, readers and intercessors. Thank you to all of you. We gave particular thanks to Reverend Liz and Paul Strickland at the end of the year. We have been blessed by their presence amongst us for 18 years and especially by the prayerful and real

sermons with which Liz has fed and inspired us. We prayed for God's blessing upon their ministry in Holywell.

There was encouragement in the keeping of Lent and Holy Week. The devotions of Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, as well as Easter Sunday were observed and celebrated. During Lent a group of us undertook the 'Living in love and faith course'. It challenged us to listen to one another, to others, to ourselves, to God attentively and patiently. The cross made from the village Christmas tree stood outside church through Holy Week and Easter.

We celebrated summer and creation with the annual Feast Week service in July, Lammas in August, Pet Service and Harvest celebration in September. It was good to be joined by the school choir for Harvest and by the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers on Remembrance Sunday which continues to be meaningfully observed.

December began with the Advent Carol Service and moved towards Christmas with the allcomers and the Beaver and Cub Christingles, the school Nativity and Christmas assemblies, the service of lessons and carols and the well-attended God's Gang Nativity service on Christmas Eve.

Throughout the year our Sunday worship is blessed and enriched by our faithful band of bell ringers and our equally faithful choir and organist. We are blessed too by the presence of God's Gang and the sharing at the end of our 4th Sunday Service. Thank you to all of you for all that you bring not only to the wider congregation but to the village community.

Also going on throughout the year is the care and compassion of pastoral visiting. Thank you to those who take the initiative and give of yourselves in this ministry which is of the essence of our shared life in Christ.

One of the ways in which we continue to be the Parish Church is through the occasional offices. In 2024 we celebrated 9 baptisms, 2 marriages and conducted 10 funerals.

The PCC met six times during the year preceded on each occasion by a meeting of the Fabric Committee. The year began with the granting of planning permission for the extension to the north aisle. This freed us to progress the application for faculties for the planned works. Faculties were obtained for the reordering project, bringing water to the building, installing a servery and a disabled access toilet and moving the font; for a dais and reading stand at the chancel arch; for a new more effective and economic lighting and heating system to replace the failing existing fittings. Our Quantity Surveyor and Architect managed a successful tendering process for us and Brown and Ralph were engaged in November to begin work in January 2025.

We have been very encouraged by the generosity of the regular congregation and by members of the village community in contributing the funds for the project. We began with a target of £300,000 and that still seems the likely cost of the entire project. We have been fortunate to begin the work before changes in the Listed Places of Worship Scheme which have limited the amount of VAT reclaimable in the future. We are grateful to Simon Summers for the awareness and commitment that he has brought to managing our finances so effectively and for making grant applications. Huge thanks are due also to Roger Churchill who has remained committed to the project through thick and thin, to Mike Batchelor and Guy Morton who so wisely, gently, effectively lead us.

We look forward to offering the hospitality of the refurbished church building in 2025.

Reverend Geoffrey Boucher
Chair, 31 March 2025