

# **St Mary the Virgin Fairford**

## **Annual Report and Accounts 2024**



**As presented to the  
Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

## **Vicar's Report**

I'm writing this after returning from a break after a most joyful Easter period. It was so good to make that walk through Holy Week, with all its emotional highs and lows with you all, then to emerge with Christ on Easter Sunday with all the joy of new life and renewed purpose. I hope you all had a wonderful Easter as well!

We've all heard that 'may you live in interesting times' was an ancient curse, and I wonder if many of us are feeling the weight of living through year after year of interesting, or as some sometimes say 'unprecedented' times. There was a lot going on in the world throughout 2024. A new president in the US, making world-shaking changes. Horrendous wars continuing in the Holy Land and Ukraine, and elsewhere in the world as well. The ongoing signs of climate change affecting our weather, and storms battering the UK week after week through the winter. As always though, we may feel that weight, but through faith in Christ we are given strength to carry it. We continue to hold the world in prayer for peace, and to seek as a community to make the changes we can to combat climate change, and foster better relationships in our community and nation. Above all we are called to be people of hope, and I pray that we may continue in that hope into 2025.

Closer to home there is much to give thanks for. Our links with Fairford Primary School remain strong and well-nurtured. In November the school was visited for its periodic Ofsted inspection, a time of enormous focus and hard work for everyone involved. It is to our immense pride that the school was judged to be Outstanding once again, one of very few to be so judged under the new framework recently introduced by Ofsted. The inspector is not called upon by their role to offer any judgement on the spiritual life of the school (something left to a separate inspection), but our inspector was so struck by the real warmth and spirituality of the school that she felt called upon to mention it in her feedback to staff and Governors. The Christian ethos of the school is absolutely thriving, and I continue to be very grateful to our Governors from the St Mary's community who work hard to contribute to and guard this ethos.

Here at St Mary's we have seen work begin on the South Porch, as the floor is lifted and re-laid, the lighting is improved, and the new powered

glass doors are to be installed. This is a project many years in the making, and it is fantastic to see the work finally being embarked upon. Tremendous thanks to Mervyn Cully who has spearheaded this project from the very beginning. Of course, this has brought the usual inconveniences in its wake, with the South Porch being inaccessible, and everyone making use of the West Door – a longer walk, and a trickier descent into church, even with the access ramp so skilfully provided by Chris Peachey. We're hopeful that the end of June will see work completed, but as always with building work, completion dates can be a moveable feast. We will watch and see! However, a silver lining has been the experience of seeing the church vista from east to west laid out before us every time we enter the church, and I'm struck again by the immense beauty of the house of God we are privileged to have for our worship.

As always in this report, I have a great number of people to thank, whose dedication and hard work is a testimony to their faithfulness. A hearty thank you goes out to our wardens, Christine and David; our much-appreciated outgoing Treasurer Jos; Michael and Meg, both Governors at our primary school; Jean Kilgariff, our amazing Musical Director; the choir, sacristans, flower team, healing and prayer team, intercessors, bell ringers, sidespersons, holy dusters, PCC members, Friends of Fairford Church, Eco Church team and so many others for all of their hard work over the past year. So many people contribute to the life and heart of our church community, so I can only apologise that I only have space to name a few. All are gratefully celebrated!

Moving into 2025 we have some challenges, but also some exciting opportunities that I hope will encourage us as a community.

Financial need has been one of our major concerns over the last few years, and last year we embarked on a targeted effort to raise more funds to combat the £30k deficit in our accounts. With brilliant work from organisers, and generosity from both the church and wider community, we have reduced that deficit significantly, although we are still operating at a deficit. It is our hope that with continuing and fresh efforts, we might reduce that even further this year.

To this end, we are focusing on two major enterprises. The first is our church Open Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, to which we are inviting every household in Fairford. This will be an occasion to invite the wider Fairford community to experience the life and vibrancy of our church, both building and people, and encourage them to take part in that life, whether financially or through other engagement.

The second is a much-expanded programme of concerts, to be held every other month, which aim to attract a wider range of attendees. We are calling this 'Music at St Mary's', and we would love to get more of the church community involved in this programme, either in the organisation of concerts, or even in suggesting or offering contacts to musical performers who we would like to see in the church. Talk to the Vicar or churchwardens if this is something you might want to be involved in!

Of course, for all these things, and the ongoing smooth-running of the life of our church, we are dependent on our volunteers, especially in those statutory roles on our PCC. We urgently need a new Treasurer, and would warmly welcome some new PCC members (only a 3 year term!). Please pray and consider on these things, and if you feel you might be being called to such a role, or can think of somebody you think we'd do well to approach, please do speak to myself or the churchwardens.

One of the things I hear so very often as I welcome people into the church as visitors is how lucky I am to have the care of such a beautiful building. I always say to them – they only know the half of it. Because the other half is the beautiful community that brings the faith of Christ to vibrant life. You are all brilliant, and should know it! I leave you with those words we say to everyone at their baptism, and that echo throughout our lives too – "Shine as a light in the world, to the glory of God the Father!" And I know you will.

Caroline Symcox  
Team Vicar: Spring 2025

## **Church Wardens' and Fabric Report**

As expected in last year's report there is much to be done with regard to Church Maintenance following the Quinquennial report of June 2023 and this work is likely to take much time and money.

The Quinquennial report identified the work to be done on the Church Tower roof as 'for immediate attention'. Several quotations have now been submitted for the work and once a final contractor has been chosen and Diocesan approval granted then hopefully work will commence on the tower in the summer.

There is still ongoing research into what factors have produced such deterioration in the lead covering the Nave and the Chancel, but as yet no diagnosis has been made. Everything seems to happen so slowly!

During the very heavy rains experienced over the course of the year multiple leaking areas in the roof have been located and patching work done.

There were issues with the boilers once the colder weather started in October but these were eventually dealt with.

Carol Thompson's work with Farmor's School students, endeavouring to attain their Duke of Edinburgh awards, continues and we are very grateful to Carol and the students for the work they do in the Church grounds.

There are various roles within the Church which are no longer filled which puts extra work onto others already committed to fulfilling existing tasks. Looking back through the reports of the last 15 years similar problems have persisted throughout the recent history of the Church. When our last Verger retired in 2014 the tasks he had performed fell to others and as they retire over time the need for further volunteers becomes ever more apparent. We continue to be very grateful to Jill and Mike for their help with Verger duties.

The Church continues to act as a collecting place for donations to Ukraine. Foodbank donations can now be left in the Community Centre.

Permission was finally given for the installation of a single pair of glass doors in the south porch and work was able to begin in February of this year. We greatly appreciate Mervyn Cully's continued leadership of this project.

The Audio Guides were replaced in December 2024 having been much appreciated since they were installed in 2015. We are grateful to Nicholas Kent for facilitating their replacement and to the Friends of Fairford Church for their financial support.

Our thanks are due to the many people who quietly go about the various tasks required to enable the Church to be a place that is welcoming, efficiently run and cared for.

Much successful fund raising has been undertaken by several groups of people during the course of 2024 with more planned for this year. The wonderful concert given by the Carducci Quartet in September 2024 is to be repeated in September 2025 with the addition of world renowned baritone Roderick Williams OBE.

Mike and Alison (Godsal) again organised a most convivial drinks party in Advent which raised the splendid sum of £2263.75. We miss Mike's wisdom in matters 'Churchwarden' and are grateful to him for his years of service and continuing support.

On another Sunday in Advent we said Au Revoir to Denise as she reached the age of 'compulsory' (temporary) retirement which gives her the chance to consider what role she might like to pursue in future.

We have both appreciated the privilege of being Church Wardens and greatly enjoy the chance to be involved in the Church in this way led by Rev Caroline.

*David and Christine*

## **Prayer Ministry Team**

### **Christian healing is Jesus meeting you at your point need**

– Bishop Morris Maddocks

There are eight members of the Healing Prayer Team, Mary Mawle, Ruth Blackwell, Michelle Harris, Sheila Hughes, Lucy Hodson, Rev'd Canon Denise Hyde, Ann Nicholls, and Val Trafford along with Jane Kidd and Kathleen Hall, supporting us in various roles.

The role of the team is to be alongside those in need, to help seek Gods Healing and Wholeness and guidance through prayer. Prayer Ministry is available on a regular basis, during our 10.00am Sunday service, and the Healing Service with Holy Communion at 6.00pm on the last Sunday of each month.

Some of the group along with others from the community meet each Monday at 5pm in the chancel of the church, for Community Prayers. Praying for our world, nationally and locally also for our local and Church communities. Along with any requests which have been placed in the Prayer Box.

We would be very pleased to welcome anyone who feels called to either of these ministries, which play such an important and rewarding role within the life of St Mary's.

*Rev'd Canon Denise Hyde*

## **Baptism Team Report**

The Baptism Team had another quiet year in 2024 welcoming into God's family nine children, the same number as the previous year. Baptisms still have not really picked up since Covid, we are praying that this will change for 2025.

The Baptism Team members work in collaboration with the clergy to welcome and support families who bring their children for baptism. Each family is allocated a team member as their baptism visitor. They contact the family after the initial enquiry supporting them through the

practical arrangements of the Baptism Service. Along with attending the preparation session with the parents and godparents as they consider the promises they make on behalf of the child. Also taking an active role in the baptism service, by presenting the baptismal candle to the family, and may also include leading the prayers or reading the lesson. Afterwards the Baptism Visitor keeps in touch with the family by taking a gift of a prayer book, inviting, and encouraging them to attend a variety of services suitable for children and families also delivering anniversary cards.

The members of the Baptism Team are: The Reverend Canon Denise Hyde, Alison Godsal, Ruth Blackwell, and Jackie Cullum, who has recently joined the team. Janet Edwards and Helen Evans have decided to step back from the team, we give thanks for their dedicated time and commitment they gave to this ministry.

We would be very pleased to welcome anyone who feels they would like to join this team either as a visitor or helping with the administration, which plays such an important and rewarding role within the life of the church and community.

*Rev'd Canon Denise Hyde*

### **Cirencester Deanery Synod**

Our Deanery Synod met three times in 2024.

The Deanery Synod Standing Committee met 7 times.

1. In March Deanery Synod at RAU focused on stewardship and the way Parish Share is collected.

Discussion was led by Lisa-Jayne Lewis (Diocesan Giving and Stewardship Advisor) who is a fundraising professional. Her advice is available to all Parishes ([lewis@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:lewis@glosdioc.org.uk))

Rev. James Caldwell Chaplain to Gloucesters announced his transfer to Germany in the summer.

Rev Poppy Hughes Tetbury is to move to London Diocese.

Rev Kim Brown moved to Worcester Diocese.

## 2. In June Deanery Synod at Harnhill Centre for Christian Healing focused on Ministry.

Discussion was led by Rev Kate Stacey and Rev Andrew Cinnamond. Together they informed Synod of the training available to Lay as well as ordained members of our churches. Because of the uniqueness of each Deanery in our Diocese, training is organised on a Deanery level. In our Deanery there is training for Lay Ministry leaders.

In April 2025 a course for Funeral and Bereavement Ministry will begin at The Monastery, Cirencester (Old House of Fraser.). Our new EcoChurch representative, Rosemary Bailey, gave a short report on her new role and plans.

Diocesan Synod elections returned the following: Clergy: Graham Morris, Caroline Symcox, Jackie Colburn, Tim Hastie-Smith, Luke Falvey, and John Birchall. Laity: Rosemary Bailey, Karen Czapiewski, George Collins, Rachel Jago and Peter Moore.

On 1 August Bishop Rachel visited our deanery. She joined a group of 20 DS members for lunch at RAU before a tour of our deanery including a vineyard and a farm for milking.

## 3. In November Deanery Synod at The Monastery, Cirencester focused on Mission.

Rev Adrian Beere gave a short presentation about The Monastery which runs as a medieval monastery but is secular. Workers are paid a living wage and receive training. He encouraged the community to get involved. Members then had a guided tour. The building (former House of Fraser in Cirencester) is well worth a visit.

There was a message to members from Bishops Rachel and Robert about the Makin review and resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby. In the light of this Lay Chair George Collins urged Parishes to take Safeguarding seriously and use the online training available at <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org> George then gave a presentation on the vacancies in our deanery.

Our Deanery is large with 45 Parishes and 60 churches 10 full time Clergy + 0.9 House for Duty.

Of the seven Benefices 5 will be vacant by 2025 but advertisements are receiving a very small number of qualified applicants. Multi Parish Benefices are unattractive to potential incumbents. The support of retired clergy is vital but occludes the underlying problem of recruitment.

*Michael Vann*

## **Friends of Fairford Church**

Chairman's report for the year to 30th September 2024

### **1. Recent projects**

- a. This has been another quiet year for the Friends, while waiting for various projects on the church to move forward. But this will no doubt subsequently be viewed as the quiet before the storm.

### **2. Future projects**

- a. The installation of a glass door in the South Porch is now well advanced. As you will all know, the builders closed off the porch some months ago hence the main entrance being switched to the West Door. We understand that the flagstones making up the Porch floor have been taken out and the frame for the new glass door has been installed. The latter enabled measurements to be taken for the glass door itself, and when the door has been made the engraving of the glass can be done. It is currently hoped that this project will be completed around the end of June.
- b. The specifications for the replacement sound system and new video projection have been agreed by the PCC and the appropriate permissions sought.
- c. The lead on the roof of the church tower has perished in places and inevitably this leads to leaks through into the bell chamber below. This section of lead is over 100 years old, and so there are no technical reasons why the lead should not be replaced like for like. This means that no faculty is needed and thus this particular project is likely to move forward quite speedily.

- d. The PCC are waiting for inspections of the lead on the roof above the South aisle. This lead is only 20 or so years old and appears to have failed due to corrosion between the lead and the timber underneath. There is little point in replacing this lead or perhaps using a lighter material, until the underlying reason for the failure is known.

### 3. Finances

- a. Our long serving Treasurer Malcolm White has indicated that he will be retiring at the end of the current year. If any of you might be willing to take over from him or know someone who might do it, then do please let me know.
- b. I won't steal too much of Malcolm's thunder but I can report on one financial point concerning divestment. It was apparent to the Trustees during the year we are reporting on, that the PCC would need a significant financial contribution from us in the near future for the South Porch, Sound & Video systems, and Tower lead replacement projects. Our financial adviser at Charles Stanley agreed with us that in these circumstances it would be prudent to sell around £100,000 of our investments (out of a total of around £500,000). This was done right at the end of the financial year. Since then, the proceeds have been received and added to our COIF deposit account where they are earning a reasonable rate of interest. And indeed since that, we have paid out a small part of this cash to the PCC to cover some of their preliminary costs.
- c. At the time of composing this report in early April 2025 the stock markets all over the world have slumped in value, triggered by import tariffs imposed by the USA and in many cases reciprocal tariffs proposed by countries exporting to the USA. But we have no certainty on when the scope of the South Aisle roof work might be fixed, still less on when it might have to be paid for and how much it might cost. So until then, the rest of our assets remain invested.

### 4. Outing

- a. The outing this current year is on Tuesday 3rd June 2025. We are to visit Tewkesbury Abbey in the morning and perhaps Bourton House Gardens in the afternoon. A further

note will come out in the parish newsletter after Easter when bookings will open, but please note this date in your diaries if you are likely to be interested.

*Simon Mumford*

*Chair of the Trustees*

### **Choir report**

Firstly, a big thankyou to the members of the choir who turn up week after week for practices and services and sing anything that I put in front of them!

We are asked to sing at most weddings in St. Mary's and also travel to local churches who have no choir of their own.

More recently we have had requests to sing at funeral and thanksgiving services both at home and away, and our choristers attend these whenever possible. We are fortunate to have singing friends who can help us out when needed.

I must mention Geoff Hawkes who was a stalwart of the basses for many years, but had to give up singing in the choir due to the onset of dementia. He has now moved to Cumbria to be with his son, Simon. Geoff attended every service that he could and was much liked and respected.

Special thanks go to Derrick for his still lovely singing and his help after choir practice, and to Barry for helping the visually impaired, putting up the hymn numbers, printing the hymn lists, etc. etc.

We would welcome any singers who would like to join us.

*Jean Kilgariff (Director of Music)*

### **St Mary's Fairford Bellringers**

During the course of the year we have been able to ring for all Sunday Morning Services. This is a lovely call to worship for the community and worshippers alike.

We have also rung for weddings and funerals when requested. The overall quality of the ringing has gradually improved as we coax, train and encourage new and existing ringers to a better skill level in the art. Looking ahead. Although ringer's numbers for our Fairford Band looks healthy we have too few younger members. To this end we plan a

recruitment drive to coincide with the Church Open day on the 10<sup>th</sup> May.

I continue to maintain the bells. The annual inspection from Taylor bell hangers showed no problems or required repairs. I have changed five stays (an 'overthrow' safety device) damaged by less experienced ringers. I have had 3 ropes repaired with new tail ends and 1 new spare rope made to cover rope damage eventualities. Our Tower Fund has met the costs of these materials and repairs. This is made up of money raised from visiting ringers and a proportion of the fees from weddings.

The imminent re roofing of the tower is welcomed, as there has been water leaking over the bell installation for some time which long term is detrimental. I plan to liaise with Caroline and David and monitor the repairs to avoid damage to the installation.

Over the next 12 months we plan to refurbish the rope guide wires from the guide ring to the vaulting and the ceiling bosses. We intend to raise the funds for this locally and through grants.

*Peter Harris.*

*Tower Captain.*

## **Parish Office**

I continue to work at home and office and it works well. The office is progressively getting busier and busier which I enjoy. I like people popping in for a chat or advice.

I am at present renewing the Electoral Roll which takes up a great amount of my time and it is also the time of year for the Annual Report to be put together.

There were quite a few requesting guided tours in 2024 and already several for this year. Margaret Bishop who is a brilliant guide has been training others to help which will take some of the pressure off her.

The newsletter is now sent out to over 250 households not only in Fairford and Gloucestershire but as far as the States!

My thanks to Michelle who continues to work on Fridays and takes over for me when I have a holiday or the odd day off.

*Heather Gorton*

### **Church Flower Team**

We welcome three new members Jane Kidd, Zehra Williamson and Beth's daughter. Rosannah, which now makes a team of 17.

There were a number of weddings and funerals in 2024. Several weddings are booked for this year and hopefully we will be asked to do the arrangements.

We are now all using chicken wire so there are no more boxes of oasis to be stored in the church! Everyone appears to be adapting well and I personally find it far easier.

If anyone would like to be on the rota do please contact me either at home or the office. All my details are in the Newsletter.

Finally, my thanks to all the flower arrangers on the team. They are brilliant and so willing to help whenever necessary.

*Heather Gorton*

### **Steward's Report**

The band of Stewards have over the last year continued to be invaluable in welcoming and helping our many visitors. Most of the slots are at present covered.

We are grateful for help with the early morning slot on a Monday and although weekends are covered better; weekday afternoons are slightly harder to fill.

The arrival of a new and updated Audio Guide has been greatly appreciated and our thanks go to Nicolas Kent for giving and making this possible. Also to Chris Peachey for helping in the setting up of the machine and to all the generous people at the Advent drinks party who donated the proceeds to the machine.

We would like to remind Stewards that we would be grateful to know if you are changing or needing a replacement for a slot.

Finally our renewed thanks to everyone and also to Dave Salter for printing the Rotas out.

*Alison Godsal and Sally Salter.*

## **Eco Church**

In March 2024, after much time and effort by the team, St Mary's gained a Silver Award under the A-Rocha Eco Church scheme, designed to encourage churches to become more Eco-positive & active in their work for the environment.

Following this it was decided not to pursue the gold award immediately, though still continue with environmental activities and concerns.

A Prayer Station was set up for the 'Thy Kingdom Come' Prayer Service at St Mary's in May.

Beth (Bruce-Gardner) has continued her dedicated efforts to encourage others and spread the word on how God can be glorified sustainably in relation to church flowers. On 6<sup>th</sup> July, representing St Mary's Flower arranging team, Beth & Alison Godsal, created a huge beautiful flower arrangement at Cirencester Church's Sustainable Flower Festival. Beth is now an Ambassador for SCF and involved with ongoing commitments.

As part of the Creationtide Season, on 1<sup>st</sup> September we were pleased to welcome Margot & Martin Hodson to St Mary's. Margot preached the sermon, & Martin answered questions at a well-attended coffee & chat after the Service. The theme was 'Tackling Climate Change from a Christian perspective'.

Although St Mary's is no longer supporting the Dakatcha Nature Reserve in Kenya financially, we do still receive progress reports and are pleased to hear of progress, particularly of more land acquisition, and at last, a breeding pair of Sokoke Scops Owls have been sighted on the reserve.

In the churchyard the 2 bulb areas are now more established & flourishing. We continue to encourage wildlife & flowers in the long grass areas, though wet weather in late summer has delayed the ideal

grass cutting times. We are grateful to all those willing volunteers who have helped with tasks in this area.

I have now stepped back from leading the Eco Church Team, though will still have involvement in the churchyard aspect.

Beth & Jane (Kidd) are now putting their heads together to lead the team forwards, with plans to involve more people in St Mary's Eco Church. Please contact them if you would like to be involved.

*Janet Edwards*

## **Messy Church**

In my report to the APCM last year I suggested that attendance at Messy Church was beginning to fall away and that we might need to review our provision for families in the year ahead. We continued to provide Messy Church throughout 2024, but unfortunately numbers did not pick up and after much prayer and discussion, in January 2025, we decided to close Messy Church. It seems that since Covid, families are spending their weekends differently and a Sunday afternoon is no longer a good time for them to attend a church service.

Our first Messy Church was on Shrove Tuesday in 2012 after much encouragement from Kathleen and Frank Hall. We had pancakes of course! We then started doing some research, visited other Messy Churches in the area and began as Funday Sunday in the summer of 2013. My first records start in November 2013 with a request from us to the Parish News for more help in running it! Initially we were meeting on the first Sunday in a month but in September 2015 we had a relaunch and officially joined the Messy Church movement, changing our name to Messy Church and meeting on the second Sunday of every month.

The format remained the same throughout: activities and crafts were offered to the families, followed by a Celebration including some singing, a time of prayer and followed by a cooked meal. Some of the activities were surprising – junk modelling was popular and on one session we raced go-karts made largely from cardboard down the church path. We had fishing from a paddling pool, and lots of sticking, gluing, icing biscuits, and painting – suitably messy! Dens were made and cleared away, balloon modelled swords were constructed for Gethsemane, and a lot of obstacle courses were attempted, with the participants often blindfold.

After the Celebration and much clearing up, we then moved to the Community Centre every session for a cooked meal. Jacket potatoes, pasta bake, lasagna, were among the many favourites for the main course, and the dessert was very popular. The meals were initially cooked for us by Simon and Lizzie Morris, then later by the Messy Church helpers and then since Covid by a team of lovely ladies organised by Mary Mawle calling themselves the Messy Cooks. Ann Edwards and her family usually provided the very popular dessert course.

Since December 2013 we have welcomed over 80 families with over 160 children. Some of these came for many years, some only a few weeks. We have taken part in several Fairford Festivals, we produced an entry for a Flower Festival in the church, we joined in the Summer Barbecue of 2020. We have had special services for Palm Sunday, Harvest, Christmas, and even a Pet Service. We also grew daffodils for the Mothering Service of March 2020 and delivered them all round Fairford just after lockdown.

Frank and Kathleen Hall started us all off and I gradually took over various parts of the organisation until eventually I ended up leading the team. It's been a very strong team and my thanks goes to them and all our helpers for their encouragement, their fantastic ideas and particularly their willingness to share their faith with our Fairford families.

So now we look for new ways to bring our Christian Faith to the families of Fairford. We need to pray for guidance in how to do this and be open to new ideas and initiatives.

*Sarah Bottomley*

## **Safeguarding Report**

During the last year, Safeguarding issues within the CofE have been newsworthy and upsetting. These issues should highlight to all of us, the importance of adhering to best safeguarding practice, in order to protect those in our community, particularly the young & vulnerable. Best safeguarding practice requires those representing St Mary's, in its various areas, to undertake Safeguarding Training. For most people this is simply 90 mins of your time undertaking an online course, enhancing awareness of safeguarding issues and what to do if one arises.

Those required to complete the different courses are listed in the table below:

	<b>Basic Course</b>	<b>Foundation Course</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Awareness</b>
Baptism Visitor	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bell Ringer	Yes	Leader only	
Choir Member	Yes	Leader only	
Church Administrator	Yes	Yes	
Children's worker	Yes	Yes	
Church Warden	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flower arranger	Yes	-	
Healing /Prayer Ministry	Yes	Yes	Yes
PCC Member	Yes	Yes	Yes
Steward	Yes	-	

Since the last APCM 13 people in positions at St Mary's have completed the Basis Course, 6 people the Foundation Course, and 12 people the Domestic Abuse Awareness Course. (The latter reflecting the updated requirement for PCC members).

This is commendable, but unfortunately there are still those who have not yet completed the courses, particularly the Basic Course. I would ask Team Leaders to encourage their members to do so.

The job of Parish Safeguarding Officer is well supported by the Diocese, requiring training and commitment. I have been in office for 3 years and feel that it is now time for me to step back. I will of course offer my support to a new PSO.

*Janet Edwards*

## **Youth Worker Report**

### **Schools work**

Within the school year I am able to visit all 9 primary schools in the SCT with the majority of smaller schools establishing a regular pattern of collective worship visits every term and weekly club or regular class assemblies at the larger schools. I delivered 5 weekly lunchtime clubs in 4 different schools last year with a special focus on y6s. At Fairford Primary School the preferred contact for y6 staff is through a series of regular class assemblies where I address relevant issues such as value, resilience and making new friends. The y6 commitment was intensified across all schools during the summer term as the emphasis shifted towards transition amongst y6 pupils. I was able to distribute over 150 copies of the excellent SU publication, It's Your Move, to help pupils consider the big step to secondary school and it has been a great privilege to see many of the same pupils at Farmors school and help to give them a measure of continuity. Indeed last year's Fairford Primary cohort have made up a considerable portion of Cookie Jar this year including several coming to Tuesday evening's Thirst group. The lunchtime clubs at Farmors have been well attended (an average of over 20 at Cookie Jar and about 16 at Big Fish last year and around 18 this year) and has provided a safe haven to come and make friends as well as a first point of entry for those interested in our out-of-school activities. Indeed several now attend Thirst regularly and a number from Big Fish have attended an activity day, social event or residential. With a great deal of local support I was again able to provide a dozen Christmas food hampers and gifts to needy families (Farmors school-identified). Support in providing the 'personal touch' came via the Fairford Air Base, a Farmors School tutor group, a parent previously supported plus a Lions Club donation. Hopefully, this took a little pressure off those with financial hardships and allowed 'the church' to be seen as a positive, visible presence in a very practical and relevant way.

### **Sunday services**

I endeavour to regularly visit churches from across the team, supporting clergy and updating congregations on our youth work through sharing encouragements, prayer needs and vision for the future. In addition, I take the opportunity to preach, lead prayers and chat to interested parties wherever possible. Once a month, I'm also

committed to co-lead the Grid group in Lechlade where the youth of our team gather for bible study and discussion.

### **Other youth work**

Two faith-based discussion groups have operated concurrently on a Tuesday evening at Fairford Community Centre. The older group (Quench) has journeyed with the leaders for a number of years as we've sought to spiritually equip them for life beyond. We had a final residential at Macaroni Woods last March where we reminisced, challenged them over the legacy they leave and celebrated many previous trips together. Our younger group, Thirst (school years 6 to 9) enjoyed a return residential to MW in April 2024 and has now divided into two to reflect the widening age range represented. I was able to participate in 2 local summer holiday clubs (Lechlade and Poulton) building valuable links with young people and parents.

Elsewhere our youth & children's club in Kempsford has continued to flourish. Our split into 2 groups (currently 18 in the younger and over 20 in the older group) works well. I co-lead both groups and we are looking forward to the coming lighter nights when we can be outdoors more frequently!

With still no announcement of a new director at SU Romania, our plans remain in limbo though some of our youth plan to help with various Christian camps this summer as Young Leaders.

While the search continues for more volunteers to support our work, I would like to close with a huge thank you to those volunteers who do give their time so sacrificially to stand alongside me in body and prayer to support and nurture these young lives in so many contexts. Together we lift them to the Lord who we trust will continue the good and lasting work in their hearts and minds.

Future Dates:

- 9-11 May – Thirst residential at Adventure Plus
- SCT Activity Day - date tbc
- 28-31 July – Poulton Holiday Club; 27-29, 31 August - Lechlade Holiday Club
- 19-21 September - Thirst residential at Macaroni Woods

*Chris Saunders*



### **Fairford Community Centre**

Fairford Community Centre continues to be a popular venue for the local community. We have over 50 regular user groups including baby and toddler classes, fitness classes, wellbeing, and community gatherings. This year we have also been a popular venue for local cooperate and networking meetings.

A full timetable of bookings can be found online at [www.fairfordcommunitycentre.org](http://www.fairfordcommunitycentre.org). There is also a live bookings diary under the bookings diary tab to view up to date availability.

We continue to focus on redecoration and maintenance to keep the venue in excellent condition, and a place the local community wish to spend time.

In 2024 we focussed on the outside replacing the wooden gate with a steel one and receiving a grant to upgrade the outdoor furniture and purchase plants. The courtyard is now a lovely space especially when the sun is shining.

We continue our focus on energy efficiency and this year launched our environmental policy. We were lucky enough to secure a grant to have secondary glazing installed to the remaining 18 single glazed windows. This I am sure will make a big difference to the offices and meeting rooms at the front of the building. We also continue the programme of works to our lighting aiming for all communal lights to be sensor LED lights within the next 2 years.

The security of the building remains a top priority for us. With so many members of the community making use of the facility it is important when it is not in use the building is secure with the alarm set. All hirers are sent access and alarm instructions, however if you are accessing facilities only please ensure you are confident in setting and un-setting the alarm. Carly or Bob are more than happy to help or offer training, please do not hesitate to ask.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support of the centre, making bookings in a timely manner, and generally maintaining a clean and friendly environment for all to enjoy. We always welcome feedback if there is anything we can do to improve your experience at the centre, you can contact us via email: [manager@fccentre.co.uk](mailto:manager@fccentre.co.uk) or [bookings@fccentre.co.uk](mailto:bookings@fccentre.co.uk) or telephone: 01285 711571

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*Carly Hicks*  
*Community Centre Manager*