

St Mary the Virgin Fairford

Annual Report 2025



**As presented to the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting
on Sunday 10th May 2026**

Vicar's Report

They say that time flies, and it certainly feels like it at the moment! It barely seems ten minutes since I was last writing a report for our APCM, and yet a full year has passed. Of course, when I sat down to reflect on the year, and all that we've seen and done over this time, I realise just how much we can pack into that time. A year feels like hardly enough to have held everything that sprang to mind.

As I write this, spring is in full bloom outside. Leaves are back on all but the slowest trees (oaks and walnuts, I'm looking at you), and bluebells form a lovely carpet beneath their canopy. It's beautiful, and peaceful, and in this Easter season, with our hearts turned to the new life that Jesus offers, being surrounded by so much life and energy in nature feels right. At the moment, with all the darkness in our world, we need that hope more than ever. Wars in Iran, the Holy Land, the Gulf States, Ukraine and beyond, make us continually aware of the violence that can so often characterise our human experience. But as always, our faith speaks to this, and lifts us from despair. We have a Redeemer, who speaks against such evils, and offers salvation to those who turn to him. A change is going to come. Life wins.

Here in Fairford it has been a busy year. In June we welcomed our Curate, Rev'd Vicky Falvey, and it has been a real joy to work alongside her. Her impact has been felt throughout the church, and we are so grateful for all the blessings that she brings. In the autumn she'll be taking a break from us to welcome a new little one into her and Luke's family, to join with their big brother and sister, and we pray for all the family in this time of joy.

Another wonderful addition to our team here at St Mary's has been our new Treasurer, Carly Hicks, whose hard work since taking over from Jos (with much support and encouragement from our out-going Treasurer!) has already been making a real difference in how we operate as a church. Many thanks to her!

Over the last few years we have often spoken about the financial challenges we face as a church community, not least in the care of our church's ancient fabric. So last year it was great to complete two outstanding projects. The first was the installation of our fabulous new glass doors. We have received many admiring comments, and the increase in visitors we've seen over the last few months speaks to their welcoming presence. As always with building projects, complexities arise, and there are still some snags to be corrected. Rest assured, our tireless project leader and visionary of this project, Mervyn Cully, continues to chase them down with great energy. It may take a while, but all will be well in the end!

The second was the replacement of the lead roof on our tower – work that has been needed for a while, as the old lead, at the end of its impressive 100 year functional lifespan, had begun to spring a leak, to the detriment of the tower itself. This work was done quickly and well, and takes another concern off our list of repairs necessary to our church building.

In terms of engagement we have also been doing a great deal this past year! Our links with Fairford Primary School continue to be strong, and one manifestation of that relationship was when the whole of Year 6 (10-11 year olds) came to take part in Experience Easter in the churchyard, ahead of the Easter break. Volunteers from the church community lead groups through reflection on different stages of the Easter story, and the occasion took deep root in everyone who took part. I wanted to share with you a selection of some of the wonderful comments shared by the pupils afterwards:

"I felt calm and quiet inside, like everything slowed down."

"I used to think Easter was just about the cross, but now I understand it was about Jesus choosing to sacrifice himself for everyone."

"It made me feel quite emotional because he didn't have to do it, but he did it for others."

Last year we began our new musical initiative, 'Music at St Mary's', and over the last year we have seen it really coming into its own. We now have an established pattern of three concerts across the year, and have seen some wonderful performers come to share their talents and passion with their audience. We also had a little musical appearance on YouTube, as 'The Salisbury Organist' Ben Maton, recorded himself playing our organ as part of his teaching series on the streaming platform. Do go and check him out!

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, David and Meg; our super Treasurer Carly; 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. I wish I had more space to name you all! You all give so much for the life of our community of faith here in Fairford, and we love and appreciate you!

Moving into 2026 our main challenge remains financial. Our South Roof requires significant work, and so does our clock mechanism and clock face, and we are taking steps to address these issues. None of that comes without cost, sadly, so we will be reaching out to the town at large (and indeed supporters of the church beyond our town's borders) to help us meet those financial needs.

With Vicky's help and engagement we are also seeking to do focus on our ministry to children and families here in Fairford, so that will be a major focus for the year ahead.

As we look ahead to the challenges though, we do so with confidence. Because God is good, and he is continually leading us into new times and spaces to share his love and his call with others, old and young, near and far. When I was speaking to a Year 5 class at the Primary School just last week, one of the children asked an incredible question: "What different does it make to you to know that Jesus rose from the dead?" For me, the answer is freedom and courage. Freedom, to know that I'm not limited by guilt nor by death, nor by anything else that could prevent me from living the fullness of life in God's way; and courage, to know that even the heaviest and darkest of things in the world are no challenge to the light and power of Christ. 'And death shall have no dominion.' May that sureness and strength be with you and with us all, as we head into this new year together.

Caroline Symcox
Team Vicar:

Church Wardens' and Fabric Report

There is still much to be done regarding church maintenance following the Quinquennial report of June 2023.

The installation of the pair of glass doors in the South Porch began in February 2025 and in operation by mid-August. Some small areas of snagging are still to be completed. We greatly appreciate Mervyn Cully's continued leadership of this project.

Work commenced on the Church Tower during July 2025, with the replacement of the lead covering, this taking approximately five weeks to complete. During this time, lead repairs to the South Porch roof, stopped water leaks in this area.

Further research into the factors causing the deterioration of the lead covering the Chancel roof have identified that oxidation had caused the lead to blister. Replacement of the Chancel roof's lead and the underlying woodwork, together with improvements to the ventilation are necessary and, once completed, will stop further problems.

During the very heavy rain we have experienced over the year, the South side of the roof leaked in numerous places on a few occasions. The source of the leaks located, and patching work has been carried out successfully.

Issues with the boilers, once the colder weather started in October/November, were identified and repairs were successfully carried out.

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

There are a number of roles within the Church which are no longer filled, putting extra work onto others who are committed to fulfilling existing tasks. This has been an ongoing problem, highlighted in the annual reports of the last sixteen years. Without a vergers for the past twelve years, 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, with help from Mike when needed, for their help with Verger duties but we do need to recruit a number of younger volunteers to ensure that the church can continue to fulfil the roles that are needed so that regular services run smoothly; that the clergy have the support that they need in preparing for each service and clearing away afterwards, leaving the church ready and looking at its best for the many visitors who come throughout the year.

The Church continues to act as a collecting place for donations to Ukraine. Foodbank donations can be left in the back of the church on the south side, where there are clearly labelled boxes. We are most grateful to Geoff and Hope Price for their regular sorting of items donated to Ukraine, which they take each month to the collection point.

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 2025 with more planned for the coming year. The wonderful concert given by the Carducci Quartet was repeated in September 2025 with the addition of world renowned baritone Roderick Williams OBE. Since then plans for a regular series of high calibre concerts under the heading of "Music at St. Mary's" are well underway, having been launched with a wonderful choral concert of music for the Lenten season by 'Cantores', the leading chamber choir of the Cotswolds. The prestigious Cambridge choir – 'The King's Men' will perform at the end of April, followed the 'North Swindon Big Band' in July and in September Adrian Partington – organist and Choirmaster at Gloucester Cathedral - together with Leora Cohen (Violin) will conclude the season with an evening of Violin and Piano music. These concerts, aided by the generosity of the performers, and those who support the concerts, aim to raise a significant amount towards the costs involved in completing the issues related to the fabric of the church, that were identified in the Quinquennial Review.

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

David Salter and Meg Ralph

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, Ruth Blackwell, Michelle Harris, Sheila Hughes, Lucy Hodson, Rev'd Canon Denise Hyde, Mary Mawle, Ann Nicholls, and Val Trafford along with 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 Communion services, and the Healing Service with Holy Communion at 6.00pm on the last Sunday of each month.

We are looking at ways in how we can encourage people in furthering their prayer life through the various resources that are available. One of the ways is to move the Prayer Corner from the Lady Chapel into the main body of the church so it is seen by more people. We will still have some prayer resources in the Lady Chapel for people to use for a more private time of prayer in the quietest part of the church.

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 an exceptionally quiet year in 2025 welcoming into God's family three children through baptism, and one Blessing' compared with nine baptisms the previous year. We as a team along with the clergy are looking at ways in how we can encourage families to have their children baptised, being part of God's family.

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, Ruth Blackwell, Jackie Cullum and Meg Ralph. Alison Godsal, have decided to step back from the team, we give thanks for her dedicated time and commitment that she has given 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.

Mission work led by our Area Deans and Clergy. Emma Anderson has been appointed and starts work on 8 December 2025. Her base will be in TODS Cirencester but she will be visiting each benefice to learn about the activities running in our churches.

Rev'd Canon Denise Hyde

Cirencester Deanery Synod

This year Deanery Synod has offered the opportunity to share good practice in our churches by focussing on important activities. At each Synod there was an emphasis on Safeguarding with members being urged to keep their PCCs up to date. March - Celebrating Worship June - Sustainable Church flowers October - Church giving November - Music and Spiritual Healing Each Synod has been enjoyable as well as informative thanks to the brilliant organisation of Rosemary Bai-ley from Tetbury and Lay Chair George Collins. In October our new Archdeacon, Katrina Scott joined us as we discussed Parish Share and our Deanery Strategic Pathway (Plan.) Our Deanery along with Wotton under Edge and Gloucester City have been given the go ahead to appoint a Deanery Operations Lead to support the administration involved in the Mission work led by our Area Deans and Clergy. Emma Anderson has been appointed and starts work on 8 December 2025. Her base will be in TODS Cirencester but she will be visiting each benefice to learn about the activities running in our churches.

Detail: March - Celebrating Worship After a presentation by Yvonne Penn from Christian Aid Synod received talks from five people with experience of leading different types of worship. **Ian Richings** Lay Worship Leader from Elmstone Hardwick outlined a successful worship format of candlelit Celtic Prayer especially for Evensong or outside in summer. **Michele Maund** a Lay Funeral and bereavement minister works with elderly people in her day job. She gets to know them and their families. She began by chaperoning but now takes complete funerals. Her original concern about the lack of a dog collar was unfounded. **Rachel Jago** explained what Cafe church is and how it can help mental health. Meeting round tables with coffee, pastries and fruit people can share opinions in a safe environment. **Pam Thorogood** described the use of Interest tables by likening them to Nature Tables in primary school they provide an opportunity to bring The Bible up to date. For instance use the "I am" sayings of Jesus. 'I am the bread of life' leads to a rich display of types of bread and engages all the senses. **Gerald South** talked about outdoor worship. Simply taking a church service out of doors, or leading a walk and worshipping on the way focussing on, for example, leaves. Publicity is important in advance and refreshments can be included e.g. a picnic. The biblical basis is the way Jesus preached outside using illustrations from his surroundings and feeding people.

June - Sustainable Church Flowers Sustainable flower demonstration by **Beth Bruce-Gardener and Helen:** Beth is an Ambassador for Sustainable Church Flowers movement which started in Harpley, Worcestershire in 2019, <https://suschurchflowers.com>. They aim to make all church flower displays biodegradable, local, seasonal and foam free. Using aluminium wire coils and a flower arrangers bucket Beth created a magnificent arrangement using local flowers from her garden and from a local grower, flowersfromthefarm.co.uk is a list of British growers she is explained the techniques we can use and asks us all to talk to our church flower teams and PCCs who can develop policies for church users who can also be sustainable not only for weddings but for funerals. farewellflowers.co.uk is a list of suppliers of sustainable funeral flowers.

October - Church Giving Archdeacon Katrina Scott made her debut at this Synod. Her presentation outlined the Parish Share allocation for 2026 which will be a 2.6% increase on the 2025 Parish Share. It is emphasised that this is a guide only, more can be given in a spirit of generosity or, if a Parish is struggling then less. By November, College Green needs a clear idea of how much money to reasonably expect so that a budget to support the ministry work across Our Diocese can be set. The money being invested in our Deanery Operation Leads is from the sale of the Leckhampton Glebe. By investing in Our Deanery Pathway the Diocese aims to reduce the need for dipping into reserves by more efficiency and better transparency giving Parishes confidence in contributing to Parish Share. **November - Music and Spiritual Healing** Rosemary Bailey introduced Rev Pauline Setterfield who gave an inspiring presentation about the role of music in spiritual healing with musical illustrations. Hard to describe in words but entirely up lifting inspiring and much appreciated. Synod also licensed our new Deanery Reader Warden, Liz Collins
Michael Vann

Safeguarding

“The Church of England is called to share the good news of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ. The life of our communities and institutions is integral to how we address this task. The good news speaks of welcome for all, with a particular regard for those who are most vulnerable, into a community where the value and dignity of every human being is affirmed and those in position of responsibility and authority are truly trustworthy. Being faithful to our call to share the gospel therefore compels us to take with the utmost seriousness the challenge of preventing abuse from happening and responding well where it has”.

This is an extract from the Church of England’s safeguarding Policy Statement and was key in my decision in offering to replace Janet Edwards as the Parish Safeguarding Officer for St Mary’s. I wish to thank Janet for all her work over the past 3 years and for her support during the handover.

I took on the role in October and since then I have completed all the required training , compiled a record of all who have completed any on-line Safeguarding training and updated all Diocesan records. During this process it became evident that the majority of people involved in our Church Life in any way need to update their training. Training needs to be updated every 3 years and anyone who interacts with the public in any way has a duty to complete the Basic Awareness Training Course.

So, to be clear, if you are a member of any of the following groups:- Bellringers, Choir, Flower arrangers, Stewards , Church Cleaners, or Tea and Coffee team, you all need to complete the Basic Awareness Training. The Bell Captain, Parish Administrators and the Choir Mistress also need to complete the Foundation Course.

PCC members, Church Wardens, Healing Prayer Team and Baptism Visitors need to complete Basic, Foundation and Domestic Abuse Awareness Training.

Each on-line course will take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. You can take breaks and come back to it, it does not have to be completed in one session.

Having looked at the number of people who need this training and after discussion with Caroline I have now been trained to deliver both the Basic and Foundation courses. I can either work on-line with up to 4 people, in the comfort of your home, or run workshops with a maximum of 24 trainees. This training will take between 2 hours and 2.5 hours, allowing for group discussion. Please speak to me and let me know how you prefer to complete this training.

The role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer is well supported by the Diocese requiring on-going training and commitment. I believe that Safeguarding should be at the heart of our Christian faith and we must take action to promote a safe culture in all our churches. I hope that you will all support me in this new role.

Val Trafford

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Choir

Our church is very fortunate to have such a keen, loyal and happy choir. It is a pleasure to take choir practice on Friday evenings and play for Sunday services with singers around me!

This year has seen fewer weddings and the choir has not been required for all of them, but are more needed for memorial and funeral services to lead the hymn

singing and sometimes perform an anthem. It is good to be able to sing for our late church members and local friends.

We welcome some new members, Katy Berry, joining the altos, Andrena Miles in the sopranos and Linda and Peter Howlett in altos and tenors.

Numbers in the bass and tenor sections are dropping for various reasons and we will welcome anyone who would like to have a try at either of these parts.

Many thanks to all our choristers and especially to Derrick and Barry for all their help and support.

Jean Kilgariff

Director of Music.

Friends of Fairford Church

Recent projects

The South Porch and new glass doors. This long running project was finished this year and was the subject of a lovely opening service attended by Robert, Bishop of Tewkesbury. The new doors were always going to be an expensive task and so it proved, though the wonderful engraving done by Tracy Sheppard was actually one of the easiest parts of the project from our point of view.

Getting the electronic powered doors to open and close properly and to get the draft proofing right turned into a saga. And relaying the stone floor and repairing other stone work in the porch ended up costing quite a lot. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Mervyn Cully as the project manager for his relentless attention to detail and his determination to get things done right. A highlight (literally) for me was the first time I carried the cross in the precession at the end of a 10.00 am Eucharist. As I turned left on the congregation side of the nave altar, the view of the glass doors backlit by the midwinter mid day sun was spectacular.

The roof of the tower. A first lift of scaffolding was erected by the North door, up onto the roof of the north aisle, and a second lift from there all the way to the top of the tower. Heritage Lead (Mike Cheeseman) did a wonderful job replacing the 100 year old lead covering to the roof at the top of the tower.

Future projects

The markings on the single face of when the weather improves, later in the Spring. The Cumbrian Clock Company are doing this, and are also likely to do some work on the inside of the the church clock have suffered quite a bit of weather damage over the years, and the PCC have approved a plan to repaint the face and regild the hour markings. Rope access will be used from the top, and the work is expected to be done tower to replace the rods which connect the striking action of the clock to the hammers which do the actual striking of the bells. These have rusted quite badly over the years. It may also be worthwhile for the Company to overhaul the clock itself, something which has not been done for some time and is now overdue.

The specifications for the replacement sound system and new video projection have been agreed by the PCC and a faculty has been obtained. But the Friends understand that this project has been put on hold pending requests for funding from outside sources and the need to preserve existing church funds to pay for the repairs to the lead roof.

While working on the tower roof, Mike Cheeseman was able to advise on the state of the lead along the roof of the south aisle. Cracks in this section are apparently going to be relatively easy to fix as a temporary measure, once the weather improves.

In the meantime, the church architects have been asked to report on the cause of the defects in the leadwork on the chancel roof.

Archdeacon's consent has been applied for the installation of a Bug Church, in the churchyard to the east of the church and to the north of the War Memorial. This is a project started by the Church Eco Group. This involves a framework model of the church 2.5m long, 1.1m wide, and 1.4m high. Once consent has been obtained, construction will be done by Fairford Men's Shed, with the bug and animal friendly contents within the framework being provided by Fairford Primary School.

Other matters

Last year our long serving Treasurer Malcolm White indicated that he wished to retire after many years in the role. We have not yet been able to find a replacement volunteer, but if any of you might be willing to take this on, or know someone else who might do it, please do let me know.

We are also on the lookout for a minutes secretary to take over from Julie Wheeler. The trustees meet for an hour or so in the early evening in the Community Centre 4 times a year, and at the AGM held on a Sunday at 5.30pm followed by choral Evensong.

Look out for a note in the church newsletter shortly after Easter, for details of the Friends outing.

Simon Mumford

Chair of the Trustees

Telephone 07977 096171

Email simonhmmumford@outlook.com

Bellringer's

Fairford ringers continue to support ringing for Sunday Services and Friday night practise sessions. Sunday service ringing has never been missed.

Some new recruits joined us this year and along with those from last year are making a steady progress. It takes a long time and lots of practise to become proficient in this art.

We do rely on ringers from other towers to help ring more complicated methods and when we ring quarter and full peals for occasions, such as for Good Friday, Christmas and in celebration of anniversaries.

Our local ringers have also had the pleasure of ringing for couples on their wedding day several times this year. We hope it adds to their celebrations.

We have had several visitors booking our bells on their outings this year and although they are not the easiest of bells to ring visitors appreciate the exceptional sound of these bells when rung well.

The current bell installation will be 100 years old next year and is showing signs of wear, especially with the wooden fittings. It would be a good opportunity to carry out a partial refurbishment. The guides, that support the long drop of ropes, are also becoming a problem and an alternative will have to be considered. The cost of these projects are unknown until I have secured some estimates.

Possible ways of fund raising will have to be considered.

Peter Harris

Fairford Tower Captain.

Flower Arrangers

Everyone has been so good with their arrangements. I haven't had to remind anyone of their turn. There is plenty of talent for flower arranging in Fairford! Flowers are not cheap and everybody has produced brilliant arrangements.

I have now handed over to Beth as I have been running the flowers for many years and it is time someone else took over. I know Beth will do a very good job and keep us all under control! I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and I have seen a few flower festivals take shape and also weddings and funerals. I have over the years bought flowers from the Market Gardener in Cirencester who have been very helpful and before that I used to collect them from the wholesalers in Gloucester. Beth will be buying her flowers from local growers which keeps the arrangements more sustainable.

Thank you to you all

Heather Gorton

Parish Office

Another year has flown by and as usual Michelle and I have been kept busy. There is always something happening and there is never a dull moment! I am retiring after the APCM and I wish my successor the very best. I took over from Jane Hawkes which is many years ago. In those days there was not much to do in the office except answer the phone and greet visitors, there were about five of us who did a day each. I took over from them all except Michelle (who does Fridays) in about 2010 (not one of us can remember the exact date!) and have worked with several 'vicars' over the years! It has been one of the most enjoyable and rewarding jobs I have done. Thank you to everyone for all your support.

Heather Gorton

Stewards

As always Sally Salter and I are extremely grateful for all the help that we receive from our Stewards who play a valuable part in welcoming and helping the many visitors who come to our much loved church. Over the year we receive many people from far and wide and to receive a warm welcome makes a lot of difference.

We are particularly concerned about the opening and closing of the church as these slots seem to be difficult to fill and at present the load seems to fall on very few people. Extra help here would be much appreciated.

Sunday afternoons seem to attract quite a lot of visitors in the summer months and again help here is needed.

With the completion of the Glass doors we have been able to welcome visitors more easily and not via the West door. The Audio guide seems to be used more than it used to be and is to be encouraged. More visitors seem to be using the card machine for donations and writing in the Visitors book is interesting and should also be encouraged.

Sally and I would once again like to repeat our thanks to everyone for the time that everyone gives up to help and support our very special and historic church.
Alison Godsal.



Eco Church

It's been a year of consistent growth for St Mary's Eco Church Group, building on the solid foundations set by Janet Edwards and Jane Kidd, our founders.

Highlights include:

A swelling of numbers in the Eco Church group which now goes beyond just members of St Mary's, so that it has become a meeting place for people committed to addressing climate change and promoting biodiversity in Fairford
A well-attended Fairtrade community coffee morning and plant sale.

Management of the churchyard for people and nature

A churchyard Bug Hunt with educational activities to encourage the recognition and identification of insects. The event attracted over 50 children with accompanying adults

A sustainable church flower demonstration in September with 60 attendees representing over a dozen parishes from Cirencester and Stroud deaneries.
Churchyard bulb displays with the benefit of early nectar for insects
Tubs either side of the south door replanted, helped by a generous donation towards costs from Hilliers Garden Centre

A series of four winter talks, The Jane Kidd Eco Talks, covering: building with hemp, global supply chain focusing on cotton, local organic farming, and ecological water use - A Creationtide family service run by Eco Church group members.

Two representatives of the group attended a cross-deanery Eco Church meeting at Holy Trinity Minchinhampton

Eco Church plans include:

A Bug Church in the churchyard - work is already well underway on this in conjunction with the Men's Shed and Fairford Primary school

Building on the General Synod motion of February 2026 to promote the practice of sustainable church flowers both in our own church and churchyard and by outreach to other parishes in the deanery and wider community

An event for families to coincide with the Fairford Festival and another event in the summer holidays

Working on ways to enforce the Gloucester Diocese policy for burial grounds, to help eliminate plastic from the churchyard by ensuring regulations are easily visible and can be sensitively communicated to bereaved families. It is intended that by communicating with Fairford Town Council and ECT, consistent regulations can be applied to all graves regardless of who manages the burial area.

Another programme of The Jane Kidd Eco Talks for autumn and winter

A noticeboard with churchyard care and nature information, subject to PCC approval and a faculty

Two services run by Eco-Church - one in May for Rogationtide and one in September to celebrate Creationtide

Plans to start the journey towards the Gold A Rocha award for Eco Churches

Funds raised by Eco Church are split 50/50 between general St Mary's Church funds and Eco Church funds, with money ploughed back into future projects.

The Relevance of Eco Church in Church Life

The Eco Church programme is a significant aspect of church life, as it encourages churches to integrate sustainable practices into worship, buildings, land management, community engagement and individual lifestyles. It is a testament to the Church of England's commitment to environmental stewardship

and its role in the community. The programme provides a framework for churches to assess progress and take practical action on caring for God's earth. By participating in the Eco Church programme, churches can demonstrate their environmental engagement and contribute to the conservation of the natural world.

For more information, please see the links below.

www.gloucester.anglican.org www.ecochurch.arocha.co.uk
www.suschurchflowers.com www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk
www.fairtrade.net www.greenchristian.org.uk

Beth Bruce-Gardner

07791 841201 smileitsbethbg@gmail.com

Youth Worker

Schools work

It is a privilege to have access to all 9 primary schools in the SCT and support the pupils and staff in sharing the Christian message through word and action. In most of the smaller schools there is an established pattern of collective worship where I visit at least once per term in the schools where I don't run weekly clubs. Last year I delivered 4 weekly lunchtime clubs in 3 different schools as well as a regular contribution of class assemblies for y6s at all but the very smallest schools. At Fairford Primary I seek to begin these sessions in January each year, giving sufficient time to build relationships with the 60+-strong cohort. The y6 commitment was intensified everywhere during the summer term as the school emphasis shifted towards transition amongst y6 pupils. I was able to distribute over 160 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 as it helps to give them a measure of continuity with a good percentage of previous pupils from Fairford Primary in attendance.

The new head teacher at Farmors has shown a positive interest in the clubs having attended and questioned the pupils on the appeal. The lunchtime clubs there have again been well attended with around 30 attending Cookie Jar each week this year after another 'strong year' last time and around 12 'ever presents' at Big Fish with another 15 or 20 making a fairly frequent appearance. Since the beginning of 2026, the (y11) pupils have requested, advertised and organised a Youth Alpha course which has been a very positive step of 'school acceptance'. I have supported these efforts (with our Big Fish pupils making up a good number of the 15-20 attendees) and already a few pupils have attended our evening youth groups as a direct result of positive conversations!

With a great deal of local support I was again able to provide over a dozen Christmas food hampers and gifts to needy families (Farmors school-identified). Support in providing the 'personal touch' came via The Bull Hotel (Fairford), a Farmors School tutor group, a parent previously supported plus a Lions Club donation. In addition this year, I added 4 extra hampers for families identified by

the head teachers at two primary schools. 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. Similarly I have supported the informal 'Gathering' at Poulton on a monthly basis and have provided a short thought designed to engage all ages.

Other youth work

Two faith-based discussion groups have continued to operate concurrently on a Tuesday evening at Fairford Community Centre though the make-up of the groups inevitably changes. As the older Quench members have moved on to young adulthood, our new group has been small (4-6) but very faithful in attendance. The younger version (Thirst) has again seen considerable changes too with around 6 to 12 attending through the year and we ran a residential at Macaroni Woods in autumn 2025 with a combined group of 16 attending as we considered God's Grace towards us. The Lechlade Holiday Club was again an excellent launchpad for weekly links with a new generation of youth about to enter secondary school, and these connections have been invaluable in drawing in around half a dozen new faces (to Thirst) again this school year. That number has since grown steadily with 20 attending our Pancake Special last week. We lost half our leadership group during the year (with one leader stepping back after 3 years and our curate moving on to new pastures) but God has again provided faithful leaders to step in such that we are currently in a healthy place! Elsewhere our youth & children's club in Kempsford has continued to serve the community faithfully. Our y6s have inevitably been keen to move from the younger to older group which has caused an imbalance in numbers but we are seeking to grow the younger version again. Leaders will be a big challenge this coming year with Rev Catie's departure not too far on the horizon!

This year we look forward to holiday clubs at Poulton, Lechlade and possibly Fairford along with a Thirst/Quench residential in the autumn.

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.

Chris Saunders

Community Centre

Fairford Community Centre continues to be a popular venue for the local community. We have over 50 regular user groups including a family hub, fitness classes, wellbeing, and community gatherings. Over the winter we were home to Working 4 Wellbeing's warm room offering a cosy and inviting space for people over the colder months, and continue to host their talking café every Wednesday morning.

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

Following feedback from users we now have a screen in the Barker room and a larger new screen in the Farmor room with a sound system and working microphone. This year we have also upgraded the hot water boiler, arguably the most important and well used machine in the building producing hot water for hundreds of teas and coffees per week!

Feedback from users regarding the standard of decoration remains extremely positive, as Bob continues to work on the upkeep of the building. If you have any feedback please contact Carly or Bob as we endeavour to keep the venue in excellent condition, and a place the local community wish to spend time.

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. At anytime you can contact us via email: manager@fccentre.co.uk or bookings@fccentre.co.uk or telephone: 01285 711571.

Carly Hicks

Community Centre Manager