



Annual Report

A summary of the ministry of St Mary's Church during 2022

This report forms part of the APCM *Annual Parochial Church Meeting* on **Sunday 14th May 2023 at 11.45am** following a 10am service. The agenda for the meeting is included in the report.



APCM Agenda – Sunday 14th May 2023, 11.45am

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

Welcome and opening prayer

Annual Meeting of Parishioners *To elect two Churchwardens*

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

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of APCM 22nd May 2022
 - 2.1. Matters arising from the minutes
3. Thanks to those standing down
4. Appointments and elections
 - 4.1. Independent Examiner appointment
 - 4.2. PCC member and Deanery Synod member elections
5. Electoral Roll, report on changes
6. Safeguarding Report
7. Finance Report
8. Church Buildings - a resource for mission
9. ASMA report
10. Deanery Synod Report
11. Annual Report *including an opportunity to ask questions*
12. Looking ahead
13. Any Other Business *Must be submitted before the meeting (see note below)*
14. Closing prayer

NOTES:

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

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Letter from the Vicar

As you read through this report I hope that you will experience **gratitude, encouragement and challenge**. I hope that as you read about all the different aspects of our worship, ministry and governance you will be grateful for what God has done in and through us during 2022. Let's make sure that He gets the glory and praise for all that He has made possible.



I hope that you feel encouraged by the signs of growth and the way that we have evolved and developed as a church over the last year. Next month we will be doing our annual discipleship survey which aims to capture information about whether members of the church feel they are growing in their Christian faith.

This kind of information is just as important, if not more so, than the numbers we submit to the Church of England each year (but for those of you who enjoy numbers, you can find our Statistics for Mission on page 16). It's not easy to measure whether churches are being 'successful' (and it's questionable as to whether we should even try to do that) but I would certainly feel very encouraged if everyone at St Mary's were able to reflect back on 2022 and chalk it up as a year where they grew in their love for Jesus and felt equipped by the church to follow Him in every aspect of their lives.

I hope too that you will feel challenged as you read this report. Challenged to reflect on the question: **Am I following Jesus and making Him known?** I expect that for all of us the answer to that question will be both yes, and no. There are all kinds of things we can celebrate about the ways that individually and collectively we are following Jesus and making Him known, some of which are shared in this report. But there will also be other things that Christ is inviting us to step towards as we continue following His call.

I'm writing this shortly after Easter, with the resurrection story still fresh in my mind. **I love the encounter in the garden between Jesus and Mary Magdalene (John 20). Jesus calls Mary by name, she recognises Him with joy and then she responds to His call to go and tell the others.** My hope and prayer is that every member of our church, St Mary Magdalene, would do the same as she did.



Revd Jema Ball, Vicar

Message from the Church Wardens

It has been a pleasure to serve you together during 2022. For Caroline this is her third term of being warden, for Andy his first year.

While the warden's tasks and legal responsibilities can seem quite onerous, here at St Mary's the burden is greatly lightened by a wonderful and resourceful clergy and lay staff team and so many willing and able volunteers amongst our church family. To you all, much gratitude and thanks to God.

We particularly valued the flexibility, support and generosity that so many showed during the period that Jema took time away from ministry towards the end of the year.

It was a pleasure during the summer to invite so many of our volunteers to a cheese and wine evening to not only say a heartfelt thank you, but also to celebrate the opportunity to be together in person again after the restrictions of the pandemic.

2023 is already proving to be a time of change, but hopefully also transformation, for St Mary's as well as the wider Diocese. We are confident that as a church God has equipped us well with the resources we need to serve him and grow His kingdom here in Stoke Bishop, and beyond.

Caroline Jowett-Ive and Andy Judd
St Mary's Church Wardens



Opportunities to serve

This is a long report! Here are some highlights of the most pressing needs for our church at the moment. Please respond if you can.

Could you give up some time regularly to serve the church by helping in the office? We are keen to grow the team of people who can support our paid staff with routine admin tasks

Do you feel called to bless the students living in our parish?

We need every person who feels St Mary's is their church to be giving in a planned way. Whatever the amount, every gift matters. Could you set up a regular donation today?

Are you willing to join the Messenger editorial team?

We need to grow our pastoral team so that people are cared for within and outside of the church. Might you have the time and gifts to come alongside those who are in need?

Could you be a Governor at Stoke Bishop C.E. Primary School?

If you have pledged to support the Church Rooms project, now is the time to turn that pledge into a gift

Could you help with maintenance of the churchyard?

The ministers who have been faithfully serving the four residential homes in our parish would love to begin handing over this ministry to new people. Could this be you?

Could you come alongside our teenagers who are keen to grow in faith? Our youth discipleship group needs more adult support, fortnightly on Sundays 5.30-7pm

We need a few more Communion servers for the 10.30am service

Would you like to join a small group or a 54321 triplet?

Our Parochial Church Council

At the end of 2022 our PCC consisted of:

Twelve Elected members

Al Meadows

Caroline Owen *Treasurer & Safeguarding Officer*

Kate Pinfold

Nick Powlesland

Brian Richardson

Peter Robottom

Jerry Sandford

Caroline Simpson

Tony Yeadon

Lucy Allen*

Vivienne Francois*

Stephanie Wren*

Four Deanery Synod Reps

Jo Bridgwater

Hayley Brydges

Tony Hughes

Anna Mayo*

Ex-officio members

able to attend and vote due to their role within the church

Jema Ball *PCC Chair*

Angela Cattell

Jennifer Hall

Sonia Home*

Caroline Jowett-Ive *Churchwarden*

Andy Judd *Churchwarden*

Jo Morris

Simon Potter

Julie Summers*

Hazel Trapnell

Non-voting member

Steve Fairbairn *PCC Secretary*

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

*Individuals marked with an * above were newly appointed to the PCC in 2022.*



Give thanks for: All those who serve (or have served) on the PCC, for their wisdom and leadership.

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

There were six PCC meetings during 2022. You can find a record of PCC meeting minutes on the church website. At the APCM **Julia Gwyther and Ann Thomas** stepped down from the PCC. Thanks to them both for their service over the years.

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

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

PCC members are expected to commit to:

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

There are five PCC Subcommittees which meet in between the main PCC meetings to ensure that tasks are actioned.

Leadership Team *Also known as the Standing Committee. PCC agenda setting and wise counsel for the Vicar.*

Finance and Stewardship *Budget preparation, Stewardship campaign, support for the Treasurer with the day-to-day finance functions.*

Buildings *Oversight of all the maintenance and repair of our buildings and grounds. Oversight of development projects.*

Mission *Keeping our Mission Partners on the church agenda, making decisions about financial support for our Mission Partners.*

HR *Ad hoc consultancy group around HR. Comprised of church members with HR experience plus the Vicar, Associate Vicar and Wardens.*

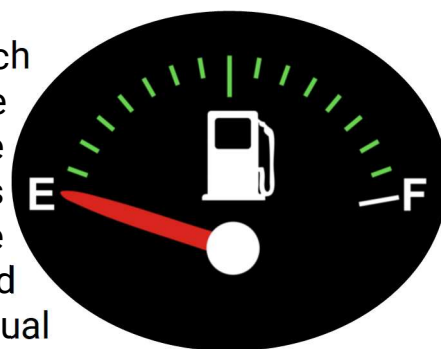
We are blessed with a strong PCC who are representative of our congregation in terms of gender and age. We are keen to ensure that the PCC is a diverse group as this will help to bring fruitful diversity within the church as a whole. If you are interested in serving as part of the PCC, please speak to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

Our Finances

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

Around 120 households give regularly to St Mary's, which probably equates to around 80% of our Worshipping Community. In 2022 the total amount of planned giving from these 120 households was £221,517, which was 74% of our total income for the year.

The PCC were aware from the start of the year that church finances were tight, following several years where we have been drawing down on our reserves to fund the ministry taking place. By the Summer of 2022 it was clear that urgent action needed to be taken, as the reserves were projected to run out entirely before the end of 2023. This placed additional pressure on the annual giving campaign which took place in the Autumn. Due to Jema's absence, this was ably put together by Sonia Home and the Church Wardens, with support from others on the Leadership Team. The message to the church family was a stark one: ***The future of St Mary's is uncertain...As a charity we are like a car running on empty. The warning light is flashing, and urgent action needs to be taken.***



The response to this appeal was positive and giving has increased, with 12 households setting up a regular donation, and another 40 increasing their monthly payments. Many also made a one-off gift and these totaled £23,000 including Gift Aid (which was just slightly less than the response in 2021).

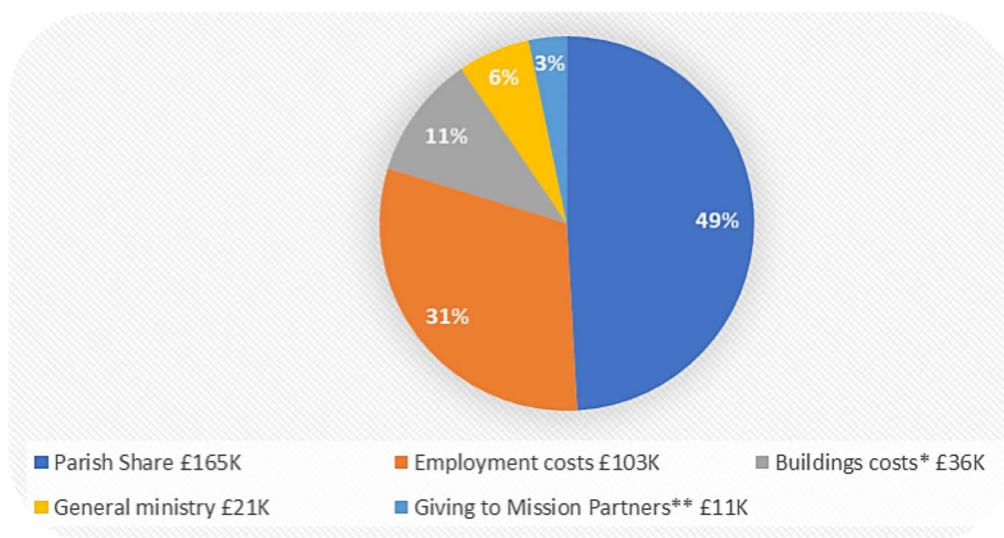
The church budget was already a lean one, with the two main areas where expenditure could be reduced being the Parish Share and employment costs. The PCC were not minded to reduce our contribution to the diocese (for more information about how the parish share is used, visit the Diocese of Bristol website). Difficult decisions have, and continue to be, made in relation to reducing our employment expenditure.

The pie chart below shows the breakdown of our expenditure in 2022 (figures are approximate). Planned giving in 2022 was slightly lower than budgeted. Although there was a positive response to the Stewardship appeal to the extent that giving

in the early part of the year was higher than expected, we lost several donors in the year due to death and people moving away.

The Diocese paid a heating grant to all churches in December. We received £3,574 which helped cover the November gas bill. Our expenses in the year were able to be controlled and we were able to keep most areas within budget except for the heating costs which have increased in a way that was not foreseen when the budgets were set in October 2021.

The budget for 2023 has been prepared in the expectation that there will be a certain amount of disruption due to the building work. The house in St Laud's Close is being sold to help fund the hall building work which means we will no longer receive the rental income.



**Excludes the Development Fund which is used for capital building projects*
***This figure roughly equates to 5% of our planned giving income. Funds for our Mission Partners are also raised in ad hoc ways through the year. The total given to Mission Partners in 2022 was £17,408.*

In order to put the church in a more secure financial position we need to continue to see an increase in planned giving. If you are one of the 20% of people within our church family who are not yet giving in a planned way, please could you set up a regular gift? We really need everyone to be playing their part if we are to continue ministering in all the ways detailed in this report in the years ahead.

We are very aware that we are making regular calls on your generosity towards the work of the church and towards our building project. Every donation however big or small is received with gratitude and while you may not receive a personalised message of thanks, we thank you for your support in our prayers.

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

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

How to give to St Mary's

The best way to give to the church is through the Parish Giving Scheme, which is administered centrally by the Church of England, making it easier for our church volunteers to track payments and recover the Gift Aid. Full information about

how to sign up to the Parish Giving Scheme is available on the church website, along with details about other ways of giving. **Tony Hughes** is our Giving Officer and he is always happy to talk confidentially to anyone about their giving to the church.



We are aware that the contactless card machine installed in April is not very reliable. This is due to the patchy Wi-Fi in church which is not easily resolvable due to the thick walls! Whilst we are not intending to resume cash collections during services, plans are being made to make it easier for visitors and regulars to give via the church website when they attend services at St Mary's. This will be through the use of QR codes like this one.



Income and expenditure

The annual accounts required by law are contained in a separate document available on request. The figures below summarise the main sources of income and the expenditure since 2020, and the budget for 2023.

	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Planned Giving	205,624	224,178	221,517	225,750
Donations	81,349	33,796	40,194	26,750
Church and hall rental	2,816	8,420	18,829	11,100
Rent from St Laud's Close	11,400	11,400	11,400	4,750
Other income	3,025	6,502	12,531	5,220
Total income	304,214	284,296	304,471	273,570
Expenditure				
Parish Share	160,980	160,980	165,000	165,000
Employment costs	69,444	88,054	90,437	95,138
Lighting and heating	11,053	11,895	17,583	22,720
Repairs	4,732	8,112	7,104	6,600
Office costs	6,709	9,166	10,808	11,500
Youth ministry	1,659	1,969	1,905	1,920
Other expenditure	15,896	17,212	15,600	15,485
Transfer to Mission fund	5,000	5,595	11,076	11,288
Total expenditure	275,473	302,983	319,513	329,651

Our Staff Team

For many years St Mary's has benefitted from the gifts and skills of a large team of staff and ministers.

This team is a mix of lay and ordained individuals, some are employed, others give their time freely to the church. The team meet regularly on Monday mornings for prayer, worship and business. When you hear the word 'resource' being used in relation to St Mary's, for the most part it is the people listed below who are this 'resource'. **It is through the generosity and flexibility of the team that St Mary's can help to resource the other churches in the Avonside Mission Area.**



At the end of 2022 the Staff Team were:

Rev Jema Ball, Vicar
Rev Simon Potter, Associate Vicar
Rev Jo Morris, Curate
Rev Sonia Home, ASMA Curate
Rev Julie Summers, ASMA Curate
Rev Jennifer Hall, Associate Minister
Rev Hazel Trapnell, Associate Minister
Rev Angela Cattell, Associate Minister
Canon Peter Robottom, Lay Minister
Brian Richardson, Lay Minister
Rachel Powlesland, Children and Families Minister
Hayley Brydges, Youth Minister
Carrie Patterson, Operations Manager
Rachel Sandford, Administrator
Lucy Allen, Cleaning and minor maintenance
Andy Judd, Churchwarden
Caroline Jowett-Ive, Churchwarden

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

Our placement students are:

Juliet Dellow
Andrew Bailey
Anna Mayo
Lucy Bush
Heather Valletta
Newton Kibiringi

In her second year of three, at Sarum College
In his final year of three, at Trinity College
In her second year of three, at Trinity College
In her final year of three, at Trinity College
In her final year of two, at Trinity College
In his first year of two, at Trinity College

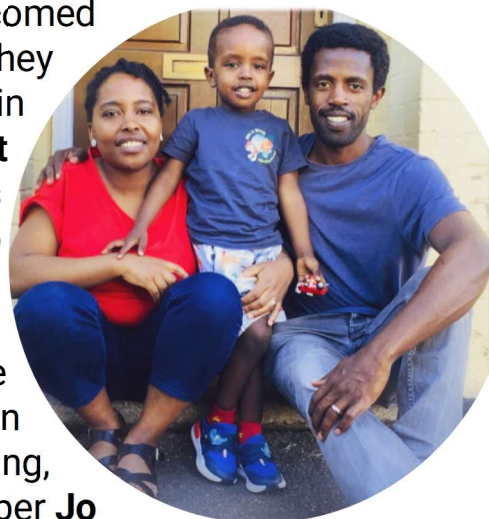
Ann Thomas stepped down as Churchwarden at the 2022 APCM. We're really grateful to her for all she invested in the role over four years.

Comings and goings in 2022

The photo above was taken in July when **Sonia Home** and **Julie Summers** were ordained as deacons and began their curacies in the Mission Area. In June we marked the formal end of **John White's** curacy at St Mary's with a celebration service at Hazelnut Community Farm (pictured here). Around that time we also said goodbye to some of our Placement students, **Holly Horspole, Tom Boulter and Annabel Stott** and their families, as they moved into curacies away from Bristol. **Heather Valletta** completed a summer placement with us in June and enjoyed it so much that she decided to join us for her final year at Trinity College. **Susanna Rosemeyer** enjoyed her summer placement elsewhere and decided to



transfer to being full time there. In September we welcomed **Newton Kibiringi** and his family (pictured below) as they moved from Peterborough so that Newton could train for ordination at Trinity College. **Our placement students enrich our church family in all kinds of ways and we are very grateful to God for our partnership with both Trinity College and Sarum College.**



In August we said goodbye to **Patrick Massey** at the end of his Ministry Experience year within the Mission Area. Patrick went off to pursue a vocation in nursing, having learnt a lot during his time with us. In September **Jo Morris**, our third year curate, began an extended placement in Abbots Leigh and Leigh Woods, returning to us in February 2023. She was a great blessing to the churches there during their vacancy and she learnt a lot through the experience.

Although this fell outside of the reporting year, it seems appropriate to note the sudden death of **Rev Jennifer Hall** in March 2023. Jennifer had a very quick decline caused by pancreatic cancer and she died, full of faith and surrounded by love, on March 2nd. Her funeral took place on 31st March and was attended by nearly 300 people – it was a celebration of her long life of faith and the love she had for so many. She will be hugely missed by her church family at St Mary's.

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

Please pray: That there wouldn't be an unhelpful distinction between the staff team and 'everyone else' in the church. Pray that every person who is part of St Mary's would know that they are valued and their gifts are needed to build up the Body of Christ and to share the Good News far and wide.

Worship and Teaching

Worshipping together

Gathering for worship has continued to be a priority for the church family during 2022, and much time, energy and creativity has been invested by many people to facilitate this. This was the first full year since the dawn of the pandemic when church services were able to take place onsite every Sunday. The main Sunday services were also offered online throughout the year, initially using Zoom and then using the Streamyard platform via the church website from September onwards. It was encouraging to see many people return to gathered worship during the course of the year and by December the numbers joining online regularly were very small.



The Week A/B format 'bedded in' through the year and is working well. It is helping our families to attend church more regularly as many now come for the 10.30am service on Week A, when we offer our **SHINE on Sundays** groups for 0-14's, and then in the afternoons on Week B for **Explore@4** (pictured overleaf).



The usual pattern of worship is set out below, and is punctuated by sporadic 10am services for all our congregations. We enjoyed having these during the school summer holidays in 2022, and also for Remembrance Sunday and the APCM.

Week A:	9am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Morning Worship <i>with Shine on Sundays</i>
Week B:	9am	Holy Communion
	10.30am	Communion for everyone
	4pm	Explore@4



Throughout the year **Connect** has continued to run on Tuesdays from 10am, ending with a Communion service at 11.15am. **Ann Thomas, Lucy Allen, Hazel Trapnell and Vivienne Francois** have been very involved with this important ministry, and Jo Morris has supported it during the months she has been with us in 2022. Usually 5-10 people join in with the midweek Communion, with 10-15 people coming along for the crafts and conversation beforehand.

In May, after consultation and prayer it was decided that **Together@4** wasn't meeting a need and we decided to stop offering this service. It had seemed right to try this for a year, but it turned out not to be the right thing for St Mary's. We should be encouraging and celebrating these kinds of trials, even when they don't work out, because they demonstrate a willingness to learn from both the things that go well and last the distance, and the things which don't.

The **St Mary's Singers** have continued to support the sung worship at the 9am services. Some of the Singers were involved with a Pop-up Choir who performed a special song written for the Queen's Jubilee at our Pentecost services on June 5th. Ongoing thanks to our regular organists **Adrian Sawyer and Chris Embrey** who support the Singers on Sundays and at their weekly rehearsal.



In addition to our regular leaders and preachers, all our services are supported by teams of people who give up their time to **serve refreshments, run the tech, lead the musical worship, prepare intercessions, serve as wardens or sidespeople, distribute Communion, lead the children's groups, offer prayer ministry, keep the church and grounds in good order and do the Bible readings.** In June we worked out that **117 adults and 5 young people** were involved with serving in

these ways. This is amazing and represents around half of the worshipping community. A huge thank you to everyone who enables our services to take place week by week.

'Special services' which have taken place

ASMA Ash Wednesday service at St Peter's Lawrence Weston

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

Holy Week and **Easter** services

Pentecost services marking the **Queen's Jubilee** in June

10am services during late July and August

Harvest celebration services

Remembrance Sunday service and parade

Christingle Explore@4 service

Candlelit Carol Service

Crib Service, Midnight Communion and **Christmas Day** celebrations



Statistics for Mission

Every year every Church of England church is required to submit 'Statistics for Mission'. Below are some highlights from our 2022 submission. The term 'Worshipping Community' is defined as *those who attend worship at least monthly (onsite or online), and those who are prevented from doing so by illness/infirmity*. The number of young people includes those who come to our weekly youth group. There continues to be new people joining the church, which is very encouraging.

Number on the Electoral Roll		219 at the point the roll was closed prior to APCM		
Worshipping Community				
Adults 18-69 yrs	Adults 70+ yrs	Children 0-10 yrs	Youth 11-17 yrs	Total
126	125	33	23	307
Number in each congregation (approx.) Some people are part of more than one congregation, so the numbers below total more than the total number in the Worshipping Community				
9am	10.30am	Explore@4	Connect	Fuel Youth Group
87	177	35	10	21
Joiners and leavers in 2022				
Joiners adults	Joiners 0-18's	Leavers (death)	Leavers (moved away)	Leavers (moved church)
36	21	2	15	4
Average Sunday attendance		135 adults and 21 under 18's		
Average midweek attendance (Connect)		7 adults		

These figures show that our Worshipping Community has grown in the last year, with the majority of that growth being amongst families with children or teens. Most of those who have moved away are our leaving Placement Students and their families. A very small number have decided to leave St Mary's and attend another church in the area. These people have been supported in their decision by the Vicar and have left the church amicably. For comparison, at the point of last year's APCM we had a Worshipping Community of 274.

The Electoral Roll number is usually lower than the Worshipping Community figure because not everyone who worships regularly with us has completed an Electoral Roll form. Every six years the Electoral Roll is completely renewed which means that everyone has to come off the roll and opt to go back onto it if they wish. The last time this happened was in 2019. The Electoral Rolls figures for the last four years are shown in the green box. During the pandemic it has been tricky to discern who had left the church. The reason for the drop in this year's roll is because it's now easier to work out who is back worshipping with us. Those no longer worshipping regularly at St Mary's for whatever reason have been removed from the Electoral Roll in line with the usual practice. 50 people were removed this year, but the roll now is a much more accurate reflection of the number of adults worshipping regularly with us.

2019 = 247
2020 = 256
2021 = 251
2022 = 258
2023 = 219

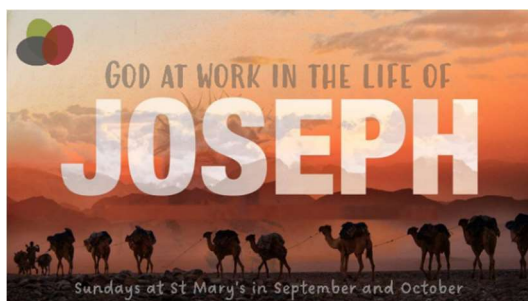
Growing and learning together

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42.

Following in the footsteps of the earliest church, members of St Mary's have continued to enjoy plenty of opportunities to engage with God's Word, to engage with each other, and to engage with our communities in shared fellowship, reading, prayer, and hospitality.



Our **existing small groups** continued to be much-valued both by those who have been faithfully attending for years and by those who have asked to be connected with a small group. These groups have been supported in their bible study material both by resources provided by St Mary's and books that have had an international readership and impact, such as the 'See The Strange' and 'Joseph: The Hidden Hand of God' - books which accompanied our Revelation and Genesis sermon series'.



In addition to our existing small groups, September saw the launch of our '**54321**' **micro-groups**. The name of the initiative states its format: five questions, for three people, meeting for two hours, once a month. Around 24 people from our congregations are involved in these groups – men and women, from across our age range, and from all stages in Christian

faith. The groups offer the opportunity to share life, speak about faith, and shape lifestyle in a Christian setting. It is still not too late to express an interest in joining a group.



Sharing life : Speaking about faith : Shaping lifestyle

Five questions, discussed by three people, for two hours once a month

We have already mentioned our **main Sunday sermon series in 2022** (Revelation and the Life of Joseph in Genesis).

These were accompanied by series looking at Jesus' Resurrection Encounters after Easter; exploring some of life's Big Questions in the summer term; considering the 'I AM' sayings of Jesus during the summer





holidays; and looking at some of the words which might describe Advent through the lens of Isaiah.

Our **Lent course** (mentioned in more detail under the ASMA section) also allowed us to grow in learning together with Christians across North West Bristol and to think together about spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, silence, solitude, sabbath, simplicity, and study.

To find out more about joining a small group or a 54321 triplet, email Simon assocvicar@stmarysb.org.uk he would be delighted to hear from you!

Services to mark Life Events

2022 brought many opportunities to welcome and serve individuals, couples and families who wanted to make St Mary's a significant part of their life events (baptisms, weddings and funerals).

During the year there were **eleven weddings** and **one wedding blessing** service (an increase from 7 weddings in 2021).

There were **thirteen baptisms** during the year (an increase from 7 baptisms in 2021), which were great celebrations. If you/anyone you know is considering baptism, do contact the Church Office.



On 4th December it was wonderful to host a **Confirmation Service** at St Mary's where **nine people were confirmed**, including 7 young people (two of whom are pictured here). These teens had been prepared for confirmation by Hayley Brydges, our Youth Minister, and Andrew Bailey, one of our Placement Students. We also welcomed **five children to receive Communion for the first time** at this service, following a time of preparation led by Jema.

It is always a privilege to support those who have been bereaved through our funeral ministry. Over the whole year there were **twenty-two funerals** (which was slightly less than in 2021). We also held several **interment of ashes services**.

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

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

Mission and Community

Youth, children and families

2022 has been a busy year for the Children, Youth and Families Ministry as we have been able to enjoy some normality in our regular groups and activities.

Bright Sparks

Bright Sparks continues to build links with the local community and beyond, welcoming mums, dads and grandparents every Monday afternoon in term time. We enjoy a time of playing, before gathering to share a snack together; we then finish with a story from the Bible and singing. It is a friendly space, providing adults with an opportunity to connect with others and children the chance to play together.



Fuel (School Years 6-9)

In 2022 we saw growth at Fuel, with teenagers bringing their friends along and inviting people that they knew from school. From September to Christmas Fuel's time was changed to slightly earlier (6pm). From September we went through the Youth Alpha course together, looking at some of the deeper questions that come up when we think about the Christian faith. We also had two new leaders join the Fuel team who are a great addition.

Confirmation Course

From October to Christmas, we came together to explore what confirmation is in the Church of England, to look at key areas of the Christian faith, worship together and share food together. Of those 8 young people, some from St Mary's in Stoke Bishop and some from St Andrew's in Avonmouth, 7 were confirmed on the 4th of December 2022. The course, and the confirmation service, were joy-filled and from that course the young people requested if we could still meet together on Sunday evenings to continue a Bible study in a similar way. This led to the launch of **Bulb** in January.



SHINEonSundays (Week A)

It has been very encouraging to see regular attendance of children and young people on a Sunday morning during our 10.30am service. We have enjoyed the challenge of tackling the sermon series passages in all the SHINEonSundays

groups, in age-appropriate ways. We are very grateful for the reliable and competent team members that support us each week.

Explore@4 (Week B)

Explore@4 continues to provide an informal and safe space to explore the Bible together with families of primary aged children and younger. Again, we see a regular attendance of families and value the increased feeling of fellowship that that brings. The creative time together around the tables provides opportunities for deeper conversations about the Bible passage amongst both parents and children. Largely following the same sermon series as the morning services, we have found a variety of imaginative ways to make the passages accessible to those attending. Our Christingle Explore@4 also drew in additional families, including a number of our more peripheral families, as we all made Christingles together.



Immersive experience trails for local schools



This year we were delighted to welcome children from schools across the Mission Area to both our Easter and Christmas trails. It was exciting to be able to share the Easter and Christmas stories with so many children and their accompanying staff and parent helpers in an interactive and multisensory way. Both were busy weeks full of fun, with a great team to provide the necessary support. Over 400 children attended from Stoke Bishop Primary, Elmlea Juniors, Avonmouth Primary and Sea Mills Primary.

Church Weekend@Home

We were able to provide a separate programme of activities for our Children and Young people that attended the Church Weekend at Home. As well as spending some time together to hear the story of the Woman at the Well, play games and enjoy some craft activities, we had the opportunity to discuss the story and share in separate age-appropriate groups for some of the morning too. Several of our young people, following the weekend at home, have stepped into roles serving the wider church.



Uniformed Groups

We continue to develop our links with the Uniformed Organisations, hosting a Christingle for the Cubs just before Christmas and a visit from the Beavers to explore the church. We also have further opportunities coming up soon.



Supporting St Edyth's during their vacancy

It has been a privilege to be able to serve in Sea Mills during this year. As well as supporting the running of St Edyth's parent and carer toddler group, Seedlings, members of the St Mary's team have been able to work alongside Highgrove Church in Sea Mills Primary School, offering weekly Collective Worship, a Y6 Transition Session and a Harvest Service.

ASMA Prayer and Support

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

We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has served alongside us throughout the year in so many different ways, and also those that pray so faithfully for this area of Ministry. We really appreciate all that you do for our children and young people and their families. Thank you.

Partnership with Stoke Bishop Church of England Primary School

Our close partnership with Stoke Bishop Primary School enables us to be very much a part of the school life whenever we can, supporting the school in a variety of ways. Alongside the regular visits on a Wednesday morning by a member of St Mary's team for **Whole School Collective Worship**, we have been able to welcome the whole school here to St Mary's for their **Easter and Christmas Services**.



This year the **Reception classes visited the church** as part of their topic, looking at different places of worship around the world. They enjoyed exploring the building and were able to ask questions about their local place of worship.

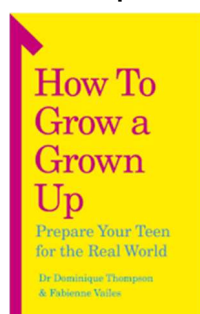
In the summer term we were able to provide a **Prayer Space** for Y2, 3, 4 and 5, an outdoor reflective time on the school field for children in YR and Y1 and a **Transition session for Y6**. You can watch a short video where the

children share their thoughts about the Prayer Space by clicking [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGunpVhSY3g) or following this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGunpVhSY3g>

In June, we had a great opportunity to partner with the school and the **Creation Art Project** as we combined to the two art displays in an exhibition at the back of the church. Children were invited to create a piece of artwork based around one of these titles: God's Good Earth; Searching for God; A View of the World; or Celebrations: Big Day, Big Ideas, as part of the NATRE (National Association of Teachers of RE) Spirited Arts Competition.



It was a pleasure to be able to welcome parents and carers



from several local primary schools across NW Bristol by hosting a talk and **Q&A session in the church in May, entitled 'How to grow a Grown up'** given by Dr Dominique Thompson. Dr Dom is known for helping parents navigate the challenges of raising children in an ever-changing world and provided much advice and reassurance for those attending. This was funded by the church school trust fund and offered free of charge to parents and carers.

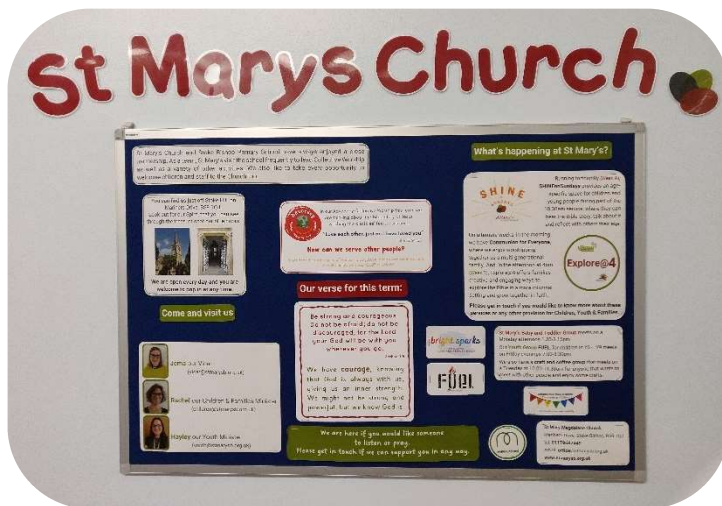
We have been into school for a **Q&A with Y3**, answering the question 'what Christmas means to Christians' and have also enjoyed being able to support **Encounter Christianity** (one of our Mission Partners) when they have been in to deliver different lessons to various year groups in the school.

It has been encouraging to return to meeting in person for the **Parent Prayer Support group**, meeting the first Friday of each term to pray for the school community and for the term ahead.

This year also saw the celebration of the **school's Platinum Jubilee**; it was lovely to be able to join the school in their day of celebrations, ending with a tea party to mark this significant milestone in the history of the school.



Over the last year, the common areas of the school have been redecorated. As part of the re-decoration programme a local artist and parent of the school was commissioned to paint a **Bible timeline** across one wall of the school hall (photo below). Another addition is that we now have a **St Mary's Church noticeboard** in



the main corridor. It is great to have 'presence' in school at all times and a place to regularly promote and advertise events that are happening in St Mary's.

Thank you to those of you who kindly **bake cakes and biscuits for the staff**; they are always very gratefully received and provide a real encouragement to all staff at extra busy times of the year.

Jema, and Rachel continue to represent St Mary's on the **Governing Board** which, amongst other things, enables us to support the school in living out their Christian Values and allows us to support the school in the Church School inspection process, SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). This summer saw **Beverly Richardson** step down from her role as foundation Governor after many years of service, huge thanks to Bev for all she has invested in the school. If this is something you might like to be involved in, do speak to Rachel or Jema.

We hold a regular prayer meeting for our Children, Youth and Families ministry, every other Monday in the James Chapel. Speak to Jema, Hayley or Rachel if you would like to come along and we can let you know the dates.



Give thanks for: The many ways that children, young people and their parents have been supported in their faith during the year, and the open doors between church and the primary school which enable so much ministry to take place on the school site.

Please pray: That others from within the church family would feel called by God to support our children and young people in their Christian faith by being involved with the groups we offer. For children who are continuing to find life difficult and for the school team as they help them to flourish.

Caring and praying for each other

Care and Support

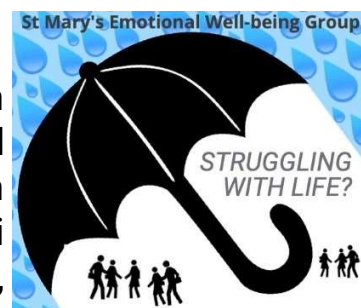
This area of ministry has both an inward and an outward dimension. Inwardly, we care and support those within the church through the countless acts of love that we show to one another in the course of a year. These might be as simple as offering a listening ear over a coffee, or it could be someone taking Home Communion to a person who is housebound. It could be offering a lift to someone who wants to come to Connect or Thursday Lunch or a Sunday service. It could be practical support in all kinds of different ways. Small groups and 54321 triplets are important vehicles for ensuring that people don't 'fall through the cracks' when they need support. For those not in these groups the ministry team and others try to intentionally reach out to those who might be in need of particular care.



As a church we are also called to look outwards in how we offer care and support. There have been several ways that this has happened in the last year, particularly through our Wellbeing ministry, but also in a variety of other ways which have been highlighted in the 'Connecting with the parish and beyond' section.

Wellbeing groups

Recognising the ongoing need for people to be supported with their mental health and wellbeing, **Wendy Hughes, Paul Spencer** and **Lucy Swithinbank** have been involved with leading emotional wellbeing groups following the Kintsugi Hope model, both at St Mary's and across the Mission Area, and these have been really appreciated by those attending, which has included a mix of people from within the church and those with no prior connection to St Mary's.



Rebecca Cross, who leads the ASMA Wellbeing Ministry writes: *Since the last APCM a Kintsugi Hope Group was run in Shirehampton and another at Sea Mills School. A group recently started in Stoke Bishop too. So far, across ASMA, we have run nine groups with 49 different people completing. Whilst many seem to grow in their faith journey we are now seeing a few non-church goers joining churches too. Praise the Lord. We continue to run two small follow-on groups using the '4 Ws' of welcome, word, worship and witness. They are safe spaces to share and pray.*

Leaders are mental health first aid trained. Reps from most of the ASMA churches are on a steering group and KH leaders also meet occasionally to plan and pray.

The aim is to make sure our churches are safe supportive spaces for everybody and that we talk about mental health and reduce stigma. Please consider who outside of church you might invite to join you at the next group. Going with a buddy for the taster session can be really helpful.

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

Give thanks for:

The increase in those involved with small groups or 54321 triplets.

Please pray:

For more people to come forward to come alongside those who are lonely or in need.

Prayer

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



The **Prayer Ministry team**, led by Angela Cattell, continued to meet monthly throughout the year to pray for the needs of individuals. **Prayer ministry** after the Sunday morning services was reintroduced after Easter. In addition, monthly **prayer diaries for St Mary's and ASMA** are produced and shared with the church family to fuel people's prayer at home. Throughout the year news and **prayer needs from our Mission Partners** were regularly shared via the weekly emails. In October the annual **24/7 Prayer Week** took place, with this year's theme being 'How we pray'.

Angela writes: *This was the thirteenth 24/7 prayer week at St Mary's. We used the acronym P.R.A.Y. Pause, Reflect and Rejoice, Ask and Yield. These were incorporated into eight prayer stations of which only two were in the James Chapel, which gave a sense of space for more than one person to participate at the same time. 2022 has been another difficult year made worse by the energy crisis and inflation but there was a positive sense of the presence of God working in our church to refill us with new things.*

There was also a strong sense of the need to stay united as a church family and value each other's different spiritual gifts: compassionate Martha with her predominant gift for hospitality and Mary's passion for prayer in the prayer closet. Finally, Psalm 112 resonated, particularly verse 7 which says: "A person will have no fear of bad news; their heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord". Let us hold on to

that; thankful for all that was given us in our week of prayer and keeping our trust in the One who is faithful.

Through the year we have had ad hoc times of prayer, notably when war broke out in Ukraine. We have also offered the church building as a safe and welcoming space for people wanting to pray privately. At particular times, for example, when Queen Elizabeth II died in September, many people came to pray, reflect and light candles.



Staying connected as a church family

It's really important for churches to make socialising together a priority, as it's often through these special events that people can get to know each other and begin to build relationships.



In March we held a **Church Away Day**, but we decided to stay local so that it was accessible for as many people as possible. We used Redland Parish Church as our venue and around 100 adults and children enjoyed a happy time together which included worship, discussion, creative activities and conversation, and of course lots of delicious food!

The **Friday and Sunday church family emails** continued throughout the year and feedback indicates that they provide a helpful way for many to feel meaningfully connected to the church and informed about what is happening. A wider group of people contributed to the emails in 2022, particularly during Jema's time of absence in the Autumn. Church Matters, the weekly news-sheet continues to be available in paper form for the small number of church members who do not have email access.

Through the year a monthly **Church Family Walk** has taken place for those wanting to connect with others whilst enjoying our local area. In September we also held a **bring and share lunch** to welcome our new Placement Students and ASMA curates. This was a fun time for those who came.



Give thanks for: Everything that happens which helps to reinforce the fact that we are called to be a family of believers who love and care for one another.

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

Connecting with the parish and beyond

Winter Warmer

In November, after a two year break due to the pandemic, we were able to hold the Winter Warmer in church. This event for the wider community was ably organised by Rachel Sandford, Caroline Simpson and their team. The church and hall were filled with people browsing the various stalls, enjoying lunches and cakes, and outside, children had fun riding the donkeys. It was great to see the church so full of those who don't usually join us on a Sunday. There are people who are now part of our church family who first connected with us at a Winter Warmer several years ago, so whilst that isn't the primary aim of the event, it shows that it can have a lasting impact. Money raised from many of the stallholders has been donated to our Mission Partners, so this was not a fundraising event for the church. Due to the likelihood of the hall building project being underway by November 2023, it has been decided that we won't hold the Winter Warmer this year, and that going forward it might be best to hold it every other year.



Care Homes ministry

For many years members of St Mary's have supported those living in the residential homes in our parish. 2022 was a year when this became easier again following the easing of Covid restrictions. Hazel Trapnell, Jenny Baker, Pauline Pearson and a small group of others, have faithfully led *Singing for the Soul* at Stokeleigh Nursing Home each month. Hazel writes: *Many of the residents have dementia, and music reaches the parts that nothing else can reach, and we hope to bring comfort and cheer to those who can often remember hymns, but not much else. As we sing, and the sound travels through the whole building, we find residents and staff coming to listen, attracted by the singing. It is hard to know what impact this has, but the singing certainly does us good!* This culminated in the annual carol singing in December, not just here but in several of the other homes too. Jennifer Hall and Brian Richardson have been regularly visiting residents at Druid Stoke Nursing and Residential homes for many years, offering pastoral care and taking Communion to them most months. Peter and Jenny Robottom visit Waltham House each month to take a Communion service, and Angela Cattell does the same at Saville Manor.

Hazel writes: *We would welcome the involvement of new people to this ministry, especially with the loss of Jennifer and as we all get older! Thank you to all who*

have supported us by singing and praying. It's not onerous and any visits are always well appreciated by the residents. You don't need to be ordained to take Home Communion, and full training would be given to anyone who was interested. Please pray about whether this is something God is nudging you to be involved with.

Thursday Lunch, which appeals mainly to the older members of our community, ran throughout most of the year when allowed. Jennifer Hall has been a faithful supporter of this ministry for many years. Ever-organised she had already written her contribution for this report before her untimely death in March.

Jennifer wrote: *Thursday Lunch started nearly 40 years ago, with bequest of £150 from a member of the congregation. The team provides a hot meal (occasionally a salad), dessert and tea or coffee during term time. It offers the opportunity to meet with friends and to make new ones. Most are older people, but all are welcome. As usual it ended the year with a wonderful Christmas lunch.*



Big thanks to the Thursday Lunch team, ably led by **Lynda Bryan-Brown** who work tirelessly through the year to support those who come. New recruits welcome!

Beer and Carols took place again in December and around 100 people came to this outreach event. Members of the church, led by **Chris Thomas**, worked hard to offer something fun and relaxed, where God's loving welcome could be extended to those who wouldn't usually come to church services. It was really appreciated by those who came.

Support for Ukrainian refugees

At the start of 2022 none of us anticipated that within a few months many people in the UK would be opening their homes to refugees from Ukraine. It has been encouraging to see the response to this across our city, and as a Mission Area we have been able to play an important part in



supporting those now living locally. A handful of Ukrainians have become part of our church family at St Mary's and several members of the church

have been very actively involved with this area of ministry. A monthly Ukrainian Hub at St Andrew's Avonmouth was quickly established and members of St Mary's have been very committed to supporting this throughout the year.

Give thanks for: The sacrifice of time and energy given by many people at St Mary's to help us serve and connect with those outside the church.

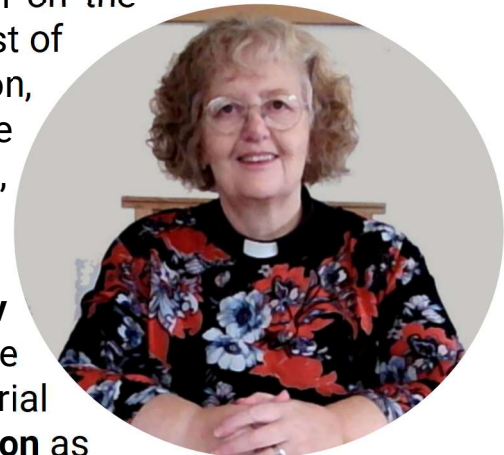
Please pray: For people to feel called to pick up the baton of ministry in our local Residential Homes.

AVONSIDE MISSION AREA

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

Avonside Mission Area (ASMA)

2022 saw plenty of movement within the Avonside Mission Area (the Anglican churches of Avonmouth, Lawrence Weston, Sea Mills & Coombe Dingle, Shirehampton, and Stoke Bishop known corporately as ASMA). The first half of the year saw **Rev John Monaghan's departure from St Edyth's**, to become Vicar of St Andrew's and St Bartholomew's in Churchdown on the outskirts of Gloucester. St Edyth's church spent the rest of 2022 in vacancy as the church wardens, congregation, wider church and community partners contributed to the parish profile in search of a new vicar. Through the year, St Edyth's have remained in good heart.



September saw both the **temporary departure of Rev Andy Murray**, Vicar of Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston, to a three-month period of Extended Ministerial Development leave, and the **arrival of Rev Alison Sowton** as the new Vicar of Shirehampton, with an ASMA focus on Life Events. Alison was quick to get to know St Mary's, Shirehampton and its community in the Autumn.

During this season of significant movements amongst the incumbent clergy, the supporting clergy, church officers, PCCs and congregations of the Mission Area played an increased and highly significant role in supporting the life and ministry of the ASMA churches, largely without need to call in support from the wider Bristol West Deanery. **We, and the wider Diocese of Bristol, are grateful to all those - many from Stoke Bishop - who offered their time and gifts to help.**



Of particular note is the arrival during the year of our two ASMA curates – **Rev Sonia Home and Rev Julie Summers** – who were ordained as deacons in July 2022. Sonia's curacy is overseen by Jema and Julie's is overseen by Simon. They have enjoyed getting to know the congregations and communities of the Mission Area as they have undertaken Sunday and week-day ministry across all five churches. In 2022 this included helping with leading and preaching at services, supporting parent and toddler groups, leading primary school assemblies, offering a listening ear at community cafes, helping at the Foodbank, Social Justice Hub, and Ukrainian refugee hubs, pastoral visiting, helping to lead

stewardship campaigns, and offering baptisms and memorial services. Sonia and Julie joined current curates Rev Errol King and Rev Melanie Griffiths (second-year curates at Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston), and Rev Jo Morris.

In spite of significant movement, the ministry of ASMA continued apace in 2022. The **Lent Course** was attended by around 50 people engaging with the theme of forgiveness. Entitled 'A journey towards Easter' this allowed for times of deeper sharing than has been possible in previous years, and was ably put together and led by Julie and Sonia. This opportunity for shared prayer and worship continued throughout the year via the monthly **Harp and Bowl prayer and praise celebrations** hosted by St Edyth's and St Andrew's. There were also shared ASMA services for **Ash Wednesday** and over the Christmas period. Our shared prayers were also served by the monthly ASMA prayer and praise sheet on the first Monday of the month.



Our ASMA Mental Health and Wellbeing (Kintsugi Hope) groups continued to serve our communities (full report on page 24) and the work of the Avonmouth Foodbank and Homebank expanded to include the Space4Makers workshop and Ukrainian Refugee Hub.

Our primary schools were supported in their assemblies by ASMA church staff leading times of collective worship and St Mary's Stoke Bishop welcomed primary school children from across the Mission Area to our much-loved Easter and Christmas Trails. Volunteers from our church have been involved with all of these initiatives and our staff often act as work-stream co-ordinators, bringing together staff in various disciplines (safeguarding, administration, children's/families/youth work) to share best practice, training and encouragement. This has been greatly appreciated by those staff members. Behind-the-scenes support also included a joint **ASMA PCC morning** with CPAS Acting Director Rev Graham Archer in September to share encouragement, testimonies, and shared vision and practice.

It is encouraging to look back on 2022 in ASMA and, seeing the impact of our partnership, it's clear why the Diocese of Bristol is looking at widening the mission area programme to enable other parishes to benefit from belonging to one. ASMA, along with its sister Mission Areas in Yate and Fromeside and North Wilts has been a very successful pilot project which continues to benefit its parishes as it works for the social, cultural, and spiritual transformation of North West Bristol.

Give thanks for: The partnership that exists across the ASMA churches.
Please pray: For every church member to invest in the Mission Area, serving not only their own church but the other churches and communities too.

The Messenger Magazine

Through the quarterly Messenger Magazine, delivered to every home in our parish, we continue to aim to make God known, to be a vehicle of good news and *the Good News*, and to serve our church and community through a balance of articles to interest and attract a wide readership.

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

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

Advertising defrays some of our costs, but the Messenger is subsidised by the Church as a cost-effective means of outreach. The Messenger communicates the church to the parish and publicises events and seasonal services. This has continued to be a very creative year.

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

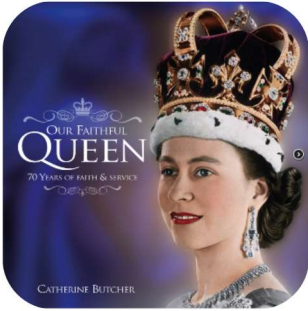
Please pray: For others (from the 10.30 congregation particularly) within St Mary's to offer their skills and time to support this important part of our outreach ministry.

Gillian Baxter and Hazel Trapnell are the editors of the Messenger and give a lot of time and skill to this task. Hazel writes: *It is with sadness we record the loss of one of our key contributors – Jennifer Hall – who worked as a member of the editorial team for 20 years. As ever, we would welcome more distributors to replace those who are no longer able to do this task and please encourage any budding (under 50s) journalists to join us. Peter Weeks has already responded to our call, but another one or two would be welcome. Many thanks to our large team.*



Death of Queen Elizabeth II and the proclamation of King Charles III

As a parish church we have a particular responsibility at significant moments in the life of our nation. In June we sought to bless the community by giving away copies of a commemorative book about the Queen's reign.



Few moments were more significant than the weeks in September when we entered a period of national mourning following the death of Her Majesty. We encouraged the wider community to use the church as a place of reflection, to write a condolence book and light candles in her memory. We joined in with churches across the land in tolling the bell to announce the proclamation of King Charles III. This happened to coincide with an Explore@4 service, so we had some very willing helpers!



Student ministry (North Village Campus)

St Mary's is in close proximity to the six student halls of North Village with around 2000 students onsite during term time. For a third year an ecumenical prayer team has been present on Wednesday afternoons in the Wills Chapel built by Dame Monica Wills in 1930 "for the spiritual guidance and instruction of students". Angela Cattell and placement student, Newton Kibiringi, have been the St Mary's representatives during this past year, joined recently by Michael Dombrowski, a pastoral chaplain from Woodlands Church. It is always a privilege to meet with students and invite them to our Oasis event which offers hospitality and opportunities for discussion about faith and prayer ministry.



In addition to our successful Carol Service held on a Sunday afternoon at Christmas, we have included two more services in November and January. These certainly brightened the dark evenings and allowed student participation which grew our ministry team in development of their skills. Testimony was an important component of these services and we had no shortage of willing volunteers.

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

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

We have been thankful for the goodwill of Bristol University in these endeavours, particularly the Senior Team Leader for the well-being of students. We are aiming to hold more services in the future including a monthly Sunday service and have plans to interact with the students in new ways as the freshers arrive on the campus and we start all over again in October.

We are planting and watering the ground for the Lord to

"give the growth" of the harvest (1 Cor. 3:7)

Supporting our Mission Partners

It is a great blessing to support Mission Partners locally and overseas. It is part of our worship, and central to our core purpose as a church. As far as possible we aim to have a relationship with all the charities we support. In some cases, this is through an individual person and in other cases we have a more general relationship with the charity as a whole. Our support for Mission Partners is always intended to be prayerful and practical. Sometimes practical support looks like a bank transfer of funds. Other times it looks like tins and packets of food, or of hours spent volunteering. Throughout 2022 we have regularly highlighted the work of our Mission Partners through the Church Family emails, which has improved the overall 'exposure' to the wider church family, hopefully increasing awareness and prayer.

Our Mission Giving during 2022

Mission Partner	Total donated
Joseph Bilal	2,200.00
inHope	3,152.65
Interserve - Lucy Monk	2,000.00
Romans and Tabitha	2,000.00
One 25	1,750.00
Encounter Christianity	1,750.00
Unseen	500.00
Open Doors	500.00
Hazelnut Community Farm	1,800.00
Christians Against Poverty	500.00
Scout Hut Appeal*	695.45
ASMA**	385.00
Simeon Trustees	175.00
TOTAL	17,408.10

* Following Christmas service collections

** Costs associated with enabling children from the Mission Area to take part in the Easter and Christmas trails

Our Mission Partners

Romans and Tabitha: Christian ministers in Uganda.

One25: Bristol charity supporting vulnerable women caught up in the sex trade.

Open Doors: Supporting and advocating for persecuted Christians worldwide.

Joseph Bilal: An influential Christian leader in South Sudan.

Trinity Theological College: Our local theological college, which trains ordinands.

Hazelnut Community Farm: A new church planted by John White.

Unseen: A charity working in Bristol seeking to end modern slavery.

Christians Against Poverty: Nationwide charity offering debt support.

Encounter Christianity: A charity providing high-quality RE input for local schools.

Avonmouth Social Justice Hub & Foodbank: Support for those in need locally.

Lucy Monk: A minister with the charity Interserve, working in central Asia.

inHope & Sisters of the Church: Charities supporting vulnerable people in Bristol.

This current level of giving equates to approximately 5% of our planned income (from regular donations). In addition, a significant percentage of our expenditure on youth and children's ministry is missional as our employed staff spend a lot of time working outside of the church. Also a portion of our parish share goes to support parishes who are not able to fund their own clergy. Collectively, the PCC are in agreement that this total amount of missional giving equates to at least 10% of our planned income. However, we will always be looking to be generous with what we give away in order to bless others. During the year we enjoyed visits from Joseph Bilal and representatives from inHope, Bristol NW Foodbank and Encounter Christianity.

Whilst not strictly one of Mission Partners we have also supported **Traidcraft** since 1970! Traidcraft sadly went into liquidation at the end of the year and we have had to stop running the monthly stall. Peter Robottom has overseen this since 2018 and he writes: *Over the last five years a total of £7,404 of fairtrade goods were purchased from Traidcraft (averaging £123 per stall). I took over from Pauline and Albert Pearson who had previously run the stall from 2002. Over recent years the helpers were David Harries, Helen Brady, Pauline Nash, Penny Spackman, Eileen Stonebridge, Peter and Cynthia Calvert, Pat Sherwood and Teresa Stratford.* Thanks to all those who have helped to run the stall and bought products over the years. As a fair trade church we will continue to buy fairly traded and eco products whenever possible.



TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

Give thanks for: All the mission work made possible through our gifts.

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

Resourcing Mission

Our office team

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



Lucy Allen looks after our facilities and keeps the church and hall clean and tidy. This is a hugely valuable role, often unseen and unsung, but would be quickly noticed if it wasn't being done! Gina and Stephanie also freely give their time to support the church office. Gina helps to prepare the slides for the Sunday services week by week, and Stephanie is often called upon to use her design skills to create some of the posters and flyers which are displayed on the noticeboards. **There are always things that can be done by others, so if you've got some time to spare and would like to lend a hand, do talk to Jema about how you could be involved.**

Our building

A space for the community

We continue to be hugely thankful for the versatile space available to us at St Mary's for worship and community. Throughout 2022 the church building has again been open every day for people to use the space to connect with others as well as for private prayer and reflection.

Many continue to appreciate the space and rest that they can find in the midst of busy lives and the opportunity to further connect with God. Gradually Christian booklets and information which we have put out have been taken, and those coming into our Church have also been able to benefit from various displays and resources such as The Creation Project, 24-7 Week of Prayer and Christmas and Easter trails through the year. A number of great opportunities to chat with others and share God's love in



difficult circumstances have also been possible because of this. In addition, particularly through some of the colder months, the Church has been a place of sanctuary and offered a place where some can get hot drinks and benefit from an accessible toilet, should they have need.

In terms of Church and hall bookings, it has been a busier year again with not only regular bookings returning but also an increase in external bookings such as parties and ad-hoc meetings hiring either the back of church area or the church rooms. In terms of regular bookings, we are thankful to welcome some of our local uniformed organisations, with Rainbows, Brownies and Guides regularly meeting in the halls; as well as Dance and Pilates classes, Arts groups, Bible study classes, our local Townswomen's Guild and U3A.



Over the year, concerts postponed due to Covid were also able to take place bringing a wide variety of genres to the building from Chamber music to Motown and Funk! Trinity College continued to hold their annual Academic Awards and Valedictory services in the church. Refreshments following weddings, funerals and baptisms have taken place in the hall and the redevelopment of the kitchen will hopefully allow for more catered events to take place in both the church rooms and the church itself.

During 2022, we have been able to increase our essential team of Duty Managers who also undertake the sound technician role at life event services and other large church events. They have been very helpful in St Mary's being able to offer the space, not only for occasional services such as weddings and funerals, but also for local community events taking place.

Repair and maintenance

Routine maintenance and repairs to the church buildings are overseen by Carrie Patterson and Peter Robottom and are ultimately the responsibility of the Churchwardens and Vicar. The Buildings Committee is a sub-committee of the PCC which supports this area of ministry.

Relatively few repairs or enhancements took place in 2022 as a result of budgetary pressures and because most of the works identified in the last Quinquennial Review had been actioned. The next review is due in Autumn 2023. Further gutter clearance, treatment of the entrance columns and low-level painting were taken forward, including at another Church Family Volunteering Weekend in September, though some painting work remains to be completed. Earlier in the Summer, professional repainting was undertaken by Paul Hanks of the main doors, some down pipes and lengths of guttering.



In March, Mogford Prescott Ltd re-made the valley gutter between the tower and the main roof under the supervision of Quentin Alder to end the water penetration near the notice board and porch. While Chris Thomas commenced repairing the plaster and repainting the lime wash, the very heavy rains in the Autumn appeared to indicate that more work may be necessary. The servery hot water boiler and the drinking water boiler/chiller were also repaired as was the kitchen water boiler, though both of these water boilers are now switched off, except when in active use to save electricity. Steve Hares undertook some minor electrical repairs, particularly to external lights.

As mentioned in the last report, the giant redwood tree in the car park had to be removed after it died. The felling took place in April by Gordano Tree Care. The cost of £6,106 and the subsequent replanting of a replacement whitebeam tree near the notice board in December was covered by a generous donation from a parishioner, Peter White, in memory of his brother Terry. Gordano Tree Care also undertook the recommendations of two arboriculturists' reports on the remainder of our trees at a cost of £1,188 (with the exception of the works to the ash near the main hall as it may be subject of ash dieback).



During the summer a decision was taken to replace the church projector as it had become unreliable and dim by one capable of HD projection with a new 16:9 ratio widescreen at a cost of just over £5,000. New Day were contracted to undertake this work in November but delivery delays followed by illness prevented the installation until January 2023. With related work we have been able to reduce the front nave south floor box to electric sockets only, although the AV system remains a mixture of current and obsolescent technology.

The investigations into the replacement of the 20 year-old main church boiler were particularly frustrating during the year. Approaches to four renewable energy firms (two via "Parish Buying") have so far not produced any realistic option apart from a new gas/hydrogen boiler, as all are agreed that heat pumps or electric boilers would not be effective or economic. Solar PV for our electricity needs is still being investigated.



Turning to the churchyard, it was decided that the cost of a new memorial stone at around £5,400 could not be afforded so additional names will be inscribed on the rear of the existing three stones. David Swithinbank has been working with Chris Thomas to demarcate an enlarged memorial garden by inset blocks and Richard Elderton has repaired the oldest memorial bench to provide seating behind the stones.

As ever we give grateful thanks to Richard for applying his skills in intricate repair work. Chris and Ann Thomas have been leading the Eco-church approach to re-wilding parts of the churchyard. Our thanks are due to them as well as the regular gardening team, for keeping the churchyard and borders in an attractive condition. The team has been joined by Jonathan Essex to lead on mowing areas that are intended to be kept short. We could always do with more people to serve in this area of buildings care and maintenance.

Eco Church

For many years at St Mary's we have been keen to care well for the environment, and we are thankful to faithful members of our Church family, who have moved us forward and shared their passion and expertise. Environmental concerns have regularly featured in our Messenger magazine and those involved in our gardening and maintenance team have continued to seek to be as 'green' as possible.



During 2022, we worked hard to achieve our Silver A Rocha Eco Church Award; an award set up for Churches in England and Wales who want to demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God's earth. It is a practical tool

and helped us identify some immediate changes possible in the areas of care for our Building and Land, Community and Global Engagement and Lifestyle.

Small changes made through the year added up. For instance; switching to greener cleaning products, moving to bamboo toilet rolls, maximising LED lighting and reducing our paper use. In our Churchyard, we took part in 'no mow May' as well as establishing new wild areas and avoiding chemical use. In our Communications, we now regularly share Eco ideas and tips as well as highlighting local environmental events.



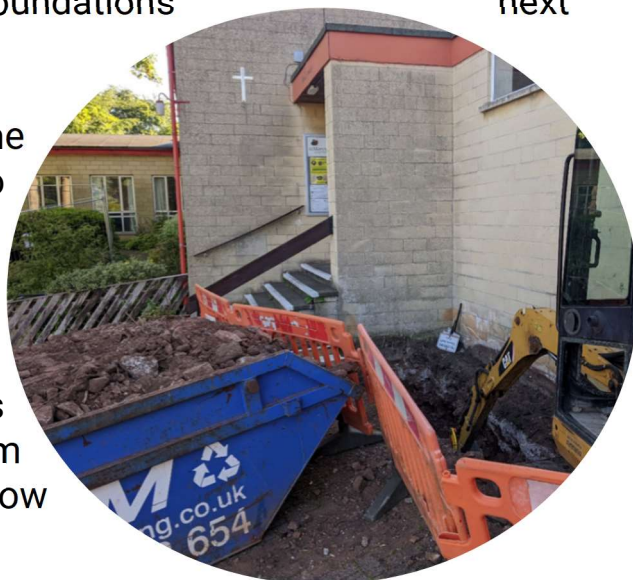
For a week in June, we hosted The Creation Project inside the Church. An interactive eco art display including work by local artists (commissioned by Hazelnut Community Farm) as well as children from Stoke Bishop Primary school. Also in June, the 10.30am service went on tour to Hazelnut Community Farm which further helped us to celebrate God's creation as we spent time together outdoors in a special service led by Rev John White.

Thanks to all those who have been involved in us achieving this. Making the church more sustainable and eco-friendly is a task that we all need to be engaged with collectively and we would love to have more people involved going forward.

Redeveloping the Church Rooms

Considerable progress was made during 2022 towards the redevelopment project, with some visible signs of the progression! In early June, just in the nick of time before the planning permission expired, we made a 'substantive start' to the project. This involved putting up fencing to protect the trees near the hall, and then digging a trench to lay some new foundations next to the main hall entrance.

In March the project was re-launched to the church family and people were encouraged to make a gift or a pledge. We had a really encouraging response to this, with upwards of £150K given or pledged by church members – huge thanks to all who responded. Applying for grant funding was another major focus through the year – thanks to Peter Robottom and his determination in this area, we have now secured around £70K in grants.



The PCC agreed to put 1 St Laud's Close, a property in the parish owned by the church, on the market, in order to release further funds needed for this project to go ahead. The architects were asked to draw up the detailed plans, ready to go out to tender in early 2023. It's possible that the works might actually begin as early as July this year.

Action needed!

If you made a pledge to the building project last year, the time is ripe to 'make good' your intentions. Gifts can be spread over a longer period or given as a single amount. If you didn't make a pledge, you can still give! All donations towards this project, small or large, are most welcome. You can donate in the usual ways (cheque, bank transfer etc). Just make sure you designate your gift as being for the Building Project. Thank you.

Chris Thomas, Peter Robottom, Al Meadows and Nick Powlesland all deserve special thanks for their input into the Buildings Committee and for their work on this project so far.

Give thanks for: The gifts of money, skills and time given by many people which have meant that we have been able to care well for our buildings during 2022.

Please pray: For the final stages of planning for the Church Rooms Development project.

Safeguarding

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



Caroline writes: As part of the training for any senior role in the Church of England we are required to attend a safeguarding course which encourages some reflection on Psalm 91. Verse 2 says *"who abides in the shadow of the Almighty will say to the Lord "My refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust"'"* To me this verse gives a wonderful image of an area safe under the protection of God. Sadly, too often safe places are not as safe as they should be, but St Mary's should be that safe place to all who come through our doors.

As a parent I was always happy to let my children attend church events on their own. It was an important part of their growing up to be able to spend time away from parents. I felt confident that they were safe because I knew at St Mary's we took safeguarding seriously. Our policy document is reviewed annually and approved by the PCC. Safeguarding is on the agenda as a standing item at all PCC and leadership meetings. Our policy is easily found on the website and is on the noticeboard and all groups who use our church and rooms are obliged to abide by our rules. Our children youth and pastoral workers, all the members of the PCC and our volunteers are encouraged to complete training modules.

It is our collective responsibility to:

- Be aware of the possibility of abuse, we must not be complacent and believe it won't happen here.
- Respect boundaries when we are asked to; and
- Express any concerns you may have to me either face to face or by using my dedicated e-mail address safeguarding@stmarysb.org.uk

The training courses are available to everyone regardless of whether you have a specific role in the church. The more people who are aware of safeguarding issues, the safer our church is for children and vulnerable adults.

I am always happy to talk to anyone who has concerns. No one can do the job alone and I need everyone to be my eyes and ears and be alert to potentially risky situations. It is imperative that any potential abuser who comes through our doors can see that we are aware and watchful and not only do we have policies

but that we act on them. Abusers are looking for opportunities and if they can see that we are alert they will go away.

A note from the Vicar

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

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

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



Deanery Synod

What is a Deanery Synod?

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

The Deanery Synod is a statutory body, and there is one per deanery, each consisting, in the main, of the clergy of the deanery; the lay parochial representatives elected at the APCMs of each parish in the deanery, and ex-officio (General and Diocesan Synod) members. The number of elected members from each parish on Deanery Synod varies depending on the size of each church/parish. At St Mary's during 2022 we had three elected members (Jo Bridgwater, Hayley Brydges and Tony Hughes) and one vacant elected space, in addition to all the clergy from St Mary's.

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

The purpose of a Deanery Synod is to:

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

Bristol West Deanery Synod Report

Following two years of continuing disruption and unforeseen changes within our local communities, across society and experienced on a global platform due to the pandemic it was with increasing relief that some aspects of life were returning. All parishes reported significant impact over the last two years in terms of decreased income, attendance, volunteering; and increased caution and anxiety.

Three Deanery Synods took place in 2022 and the key themes were:

March 2022 – focused upon shaping a motion to bring to Diocesan Synod to give the previously agreed Climate Emergency recognition a greater sense of urgency.

Agreement of the Net-Zero Motion to take to Diocesan Synod: Rev Dr Andy Murray:

that this Synod recognizes the need to take urgent and immediate action at a parish, diocese and national church level, in order to achieve the Church of England's NetZero Carbon targets by 2030. We affirm the national church and diocesan work currently underway regarding these targets. In addition, we commend the proposals outlined in the 'Bristol West Deanery NetZero Carbon (March 2022)' paper and we therefore call upon the Diocese of Bristol to formally consider the proposals and recommendations contained within the above paper with a view to identifying a programme of support targeted at parish level.

This Net-Zero Motion was proposed, by the Rev Dr Andy Murray, and unanimously carried and accepted at Diocesan Synod on 11 June 2022.

May 2022 – focused upon how we, as a Deanery, continue to shape the developing Diocesan Strategy to deliver across the Diocese.

The Ven Neil Warwick, Archdeacon of Bristol, introduced this update on the development of the diocesan strategy. In developing the strategy, the Diocese has been keen to listen to less-heard groups, such as minorities and the disabled. A draft of the strategy was presented to Diocesan Synod in March; the strategy was developed further in response to feedback; and a bold bid for funds would shortly be submitted to the national church. Key parts of the strategy include the following: Investing in people – sustaining the same level of stipendiary ministry as at present. Investing in people's wellbeing – especially the wellbeing of stipendiary clergy. Investing in volunteers – enabling all to serve as well as they can. While the church is still present in every community, we are not representative: we need more under-18s and minorities, and people are critical of the church's treatment of women, the Windrush generation and LGBTQI+ people. A key objective of the strategy is ensuring everything is sustainable.

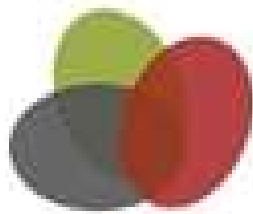
October 2022 – focused upon the impacts of the cost of living and the energy crisis.

The Rev Chris Dobson was welcomed as the facilitator for the evening's discussion. Chris highlighted recent decisions by the Government led by Prime Minister Liz Truss and Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng that benefitted the rich and had a negative impact on the poorer and more vulnerable members of our society. He invited the Synod to explore and discuss: **How might churches respond to the cost of living/energy crisis? What are the challenges for us as we make our response?**

The Uganda Link

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

Fr Charles Sutton, Area Dean for Bristol West Deanery



st Mary's

STOKE BISHOP

following Jesus and making Him known

St Mary Magdalene Church

Mariners Drive, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, BS9 1QJ

Tel: 0117 968 7449 Email: office@stmarysb.org.uk

www.stmarysb.org.uk

Registered charity: 1131728
