

St Mary's Church Selly Oak
APCM 18 May 2025
Reports for 2024

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Vicar's report

During 2024 we have continued to grow in numbers and to enjoy welcoming new people of all ages and different cultural backgrounds into the fellowship of St Mary's. It is very good to see those who are new offering their gifts and becoming more involved in the life of church, with new people joining our teams of servers, Eucharistic assistants, readers, and intercessors, as well as joining the choir and the bellringers, and coming onto the PCC.

There were a couple of changes to our **ministry team** during the year. At our APCM last May George Harrison completed his 6 year term of office as Church Warden and was presented with a hamper as a token of our appreciation. Angela Lidgbird agreed to serve as Church Warden alongside Kate Cheyney, and Kate and Angela were both formally admitted as Church Wardens at a Deanery Service in June.

In September it was a joy to welcome our Area Dean, Revd Mike Sermon, to license Mandy Butler to St Mary's as Reader, alongside Mary Cutler who continues to serve in this role. Mandy's ministry has mainly been focussed outside the parish thus far, but it is good that Mandy and her family have found St Mary's to be a supportive base.

In November Isabella Wong was authorised to lead public worship following her completion of the Diocesan Growing Gifts course.

A focus for much of 2024 was to work with the PCC on one of our agreed priorities for mission and ministry: **outreach to children, young people and families**. We attempted to recruit a paid part-time person to work with us on this for a period of 3 years. After the second round of advertising we appointed someone who looked to be ideal, but unfortunately after only six weeks in post she resigned, having made the decision to return to teaching. This was obviously very disappointing, and in September the PCC decided to pause the recruitment for the remainder of the year. Despite this, we managed to keep Junior Church and our Wednesday evening Junior Club going, mainly thanks to the support of our Curate, Fr. Jacob, and also Gerald Fage in the case of Junior Club, as well as a few dedicated adults who volunteer when they can. We recognise, however, that this is not sustainable for the longer term, and would still like to recruit someone for this role, especially as the funding remains in place thanks to a generous donation and some legacy funding. Please do continue to pray about this.

A positive development for our younger children and families during the year was the moving of the children/family area from the back of the North Aisle to the front of the South Aisle, meaning that it is easier for children to engage with what is happening at the front of church, and to be more included in

the liturgy and worship. This is very much in keeping with our second priority for mission and ministry, **creating inclusive community**.

During the year we continued our pattern of welcoming children and staff from St Mary's CE primary school, along with their parents and carers, to church at the end of every half term for services, which Jacob and I help to shape, although the children themselves lead them. We also appreciate the help of volunteers from the congregation to offer hospitality to parents, serving hot drinks before the services. A particular highlight of the year was the 'school to church' service in September when St Mary's was packed for the All Age Eucharist when we blessed backpacks for the beginning of term and also welcomed and prayed for Mr Warland as the new Headteacher.

Our third area of focus for mission and ministry is **'exploring spirituality'** which we aim to do through offering opportunities for study and learning, as well as different forms of worship. Study groups during the year included: the Lenten Christian Aid resource 'Act on Poverty'; an evening in Holy Week led by Jacob providing some background to 'the Triduum'; a couple of sessions on Spirituality led by myself and Jacob; and a series of discussions based on the book 'Women of the Nativity' during Advent. There was also a pre-Lent Quiet Morning shared with David Parker and St Faith and St Laurence Harborne. Jacob led a study group for those preparing for confirmation which led to another highlight of the year, with 7 young people and 5 adults confirmed by Bishop James on All Saints Sunday in November.

In addition to our usual Eucharistic Services and our monthly Choral Evensong, other forms of worship on offer during the year were: a service of music and readings for Candlemas in January, Lenten Sunday evening worship with meditations, Stations of the Cross on Palm Sunday, and 'Prayer in the Gospel of Luke' facilitated by our stained glass windows (and Jacob!). Prayers for wholeness and healing have been offered monthly at the end of the 10am Eucharist, as well as during an additional service celebrating the ministry of wholeness and healing on the fifth Sunday evening in September. 'The Well', a monthly Sunday evening service organised jointly by St Mary's and the University Chaplaincy, moved to St Mary's during 2024 and continues to attract a small but regular group who enjoy the creative liturgy and space for prayer and meditation, and a range of speakers on different aspects of spirituality. One final act of worship worthy of note is the Deanery welcome service for Bishop Michael, which we hosted in May 2024, and I was very grateful to 'team St Mary's' for their support with this, including the participation of our choir and organist, and the social committee providing our usual standard of hospitality.

In the wider Diocese I have continued to support Curates through their training and assessment process, alongside supervising our own Curate, which in 2024 included releasing Jacob to have a 5 month placement at the Cathedral, and a continuing weekly placement at the Prison in Winson Green. I continue to enjoy my role of Bishop's Adviser for Spirituality for the Diocese and particularly appreciated the opportunity in April 2024 to attend the national conference for Diocesan Spirituality advisers, held over 48 hours at Launde Abbey Retreat House in Leicestershire.

In the wider community Jacob and I take regular services in Sellywood house and Bournville Gardens. In December I took part in the annual carol service planned to be in Selly Oak Park, but which ended up indoors due to a terrible storm. Jacob and I have once again given a lot of time to St Mary's CE primary school. We are members of the governing body and regularly lead Collective Worship. In addition, we were part of the process to appoint the new Head Teacher, and then the new Deputy Head.

I met regularly during the year with the other Incumbents of St Michael and All Angels' Bartley Green, St Peter's Harborne, and St Faith and St Laurence Harborne, the churches in our 'oversight area'. Our clergy team provided occasional cover during the year for St Gabriel's Weoley Castle whilst they were in vacancy.

So another busy year with so much to be thankful for. Do read all the Annual Reports where you will learn more about everything that goes on at St Mary's, much of which I haven't mentioned here. I remain very grateful for your support, and I'm grateful to all who contribute in so many ways to our church life together.

Revd Hazel White

Altar servers, readers, intercessors and assistants

Altar Servers

There were twelve church members who acted as servers during the year, one of whom is new. We were very pleased to welcome Mandy Bulter in November as new server. Starting from June 2024, we have two acolytes and one crucifer at the 10:00 service.

Lesson Readers

During 2024, there were four members of the congregation who read the first and second lessons at the 8:00 communion service and a further twenty, an increase of one, who read the lessons at the 10:00 communion service on Sunday mornings. Readers at the 10:00 communion service are invited to read occasionally at the 8:00 communion service.

Intercessors

There were fifteen members of the congregation, plus the clergy, who led the intercessions at the 10:00 communion service, an increase of two.

Eucharistic Assistants

There were thirteen church members licensed to assist with the administration of Holy Communion, with an increase of five. One of those members is currently authorised by the vicar to support the clergy by taking home communion to the sick and housebound.

Lay Deacon

One member of the church has assisted the clergy by acting as the deacon at the 10:00 service on Sunday mornings during 2024. The role included leading the prayers of preparation and the reading of the gospel.

Summary of Readings for TWS

In addition to the clergy, there were six church members who provided the weekly summary of the readings for inclusion in the TWS sheet, an increase of one.

Isabella Wong

Baptisms

Baptisms in 2024 were slightly up on the previous year with 11 in total. Of these, 5 were children under 1 year, 4 were children aged 1-4 years, and 2 were adults. The adults were baptised and then confirmed by Bishop James at our confirmation service in November, which was a wonderful and joyful occasion.

As usual most of the baptisms for children in 2024 took place at 12 noon on the second Sunday of the month, although it was great to welcome the Brannon family for the baptism of Jessica in September during our 10am Parish Communion.

In addition to our own Baptisms, I was pleased to welcome St Gabriel's Church Weoley Castle to St Mary's to use our church for a baptism in July, since they don't have a functioning church building of their own.

The clergy remain grateful to the baptism team who help to prepare the church and welcome guests for baptisms. Thanks also to Kate Cheyney who organises the rota for this.

Revd Hazel White

Bellringers

The Family of Keith and Olive Haslam arranged and generously donated for the Tower to be redecorated in Memory of their parents. The Tower was closed at the beginning of January 2024 and re-opened for Sunday service ringing on 21st January 2024. The Tower looked bright and fresh painted two-tone stone from the ground to the shelf then white. The ceiling was painted white from the navy blue.

The Peal boards were safely removed and replaced in the Tower before and after the decoration.

The PCC financed and arranged the redecoration of the staircase leading to the tower, this was completed during the month of August 2024. We would like to thank the PCC for the generous donation.

The band rang for most Sunday services during 2024.

The bells were rung in celebration for all requested Weddings, thank you to Paul Lindley for managing the band and all the ringers who rang and called the changes.

The Tower was opened during 2024 for visiting bands, for a Peal and quarter peal ringing. The Worcestershire and districts northern branch held their branch practice on the 19th Oct 2024. We also rang before the service for the bishop on 12th May 2024.

Ringling for Wednesday practice has been very well supported, we continue to ring call changes, double method ringing and Plain hunt on 5 & 7. When numbers and skills allow, we have rung grandsire triples, and plain bob minor. Practice in listening and striking is ongoing.

Practice is still needed in raising and lowering the bells in Peal, Kirsty Gifford delivered a raising and lowering in Peal session again this year. Thank you, Kirsty and the band of experienced ringers who gave their time, freely to teach.

We rang a quarter peal of Plain bob doubles with a touch for the car boot sales on 04th May 2024 and 05th October 2024.

The annual dinner was held at the Peacock Inn, where we were pleased to welcome Hazel, Jacob, Kate, & Jayne, it was a very enjoyable evening, thank you Gill and David Sanders for making the arrangements.

We were invited to join St Laurence Northfield annual outing on 31st August 2024 organised by Graeme Lanfear. Call changes, plain hunt and methods were rung during the outing.

A big thank you to all the band for your weekly commitment to the art of change ringing. You are all gifted and talented individuals who support, nurture, and share your experience for the band to grow in knowledge and strength.

We thank the clergy Hazel, Jayne, Jacob, and the congregation for their support. We look forward to serving the community of Selly Oak in 2025.

Tower Representative – Joanne Goodall

Bereavement chaplaincy

During the year 2024, St Mary's Clergy have continued to have the privilege of officiating for many funerals in the Diocese of Birmingham and the Bereavement team has worked to contact bereaved families and friends, when appropriate.

The Clergy team are contacted by many Funeral Directors, both locally and further afield to officiate at services across Birmingham Diocese in cemeteries and crematoria, taking services at a graveside or in the crematorium chapel according to the request of the family.

We also take services at St Mary's Church, then travelling to a cemetery or crematorium to complete the service with the Committal.

Birmingham Social Services Funerals and Protection Property Department has an excellent team who are responsible for those who have died in the City and have no family to arrange a funeral or insufficient finances to pay for a service. Members of this team are in regular contact with our Clergy to arrange funerals and help with details of someone who has died. The Social Services Team then work with the designated Funeral Directors responsible for making all arrangements under these circumstances.

Our Clergy team work closely alongside Social Services and the Funeral Directors to arrange funeral services, making services as personal and unique as possible for each person and supporting any family, friends and neighbours if they welcome the opportunity to talk with us.

It seems that the process for funerals is changing with the number of "direct cremations" possibly increasing. This means that there is no service for the person who has died and so our numbers might now reflect this somewhat, with Church service numbers down, and services at a crematorium slightly down in number.

However, the number of burial of ashes has increased, where there has been no service in church or at a crematorium beforehand.

- Number of deceased for whom a funeral service was held at our church – 4
- Number of deceased for whom a full funeral service was conducted by a member of our ministry team at a crematorium, cemetery, or other non-church location, excluding committal only & burial of ashes only – 65.
- Number of deceased for whom a committal only or a burial of ashes only was conducted by a member of our ministry team – 7.

We continue to share in a memorial service for the families and friends of those whose funeral we have taken during the previous year, and in October 2024 the service was well attended with numbers in the congregation increased.

The service of music, hymns, words, prayers and quiet reflection with some participation from families and friends lighting candles and hanging memorial leaves with their loved one's name written on, is a gentle service filled with some pain, sadness, balanced with hope and love.

Our thanks go to members of our bereavement team who continue to make follow up phone calls to bereaved family, friends or neighbours, following a funeral service clergy have taken. This ministry is of value to those who are called, as they know we have remembered them.

However funerals change in the way they are conducted, how people grieve as individuals and families will never change, and we consider it a crucial part of our Funeral and Bereavement ministry to be there for people at what can be one of the most difficult times of their life, following the death of a loved one.

Rev. Jayne Adams

Book group

Despite a few months' break in our meetings during the time that Bridgewater Court was being beautifully redecorated, we continue to be a thriving and enthusiastic group of book lovers, who welcome a mix of our own congregation and residents from Bridgewater Court (including the manager) to our sessions. Books are chosen from suggestions offered by the group and we try to include a good range, encompassing different genres and a mixture of classics and recently published books. Whilst interesting book-related questions are debated and differing opinions definitely shared, we remain a light-hearted group who are more than prepared to digress and divert as we enjoy our refreshments!

Books read in 2024

January: The Great Divorce by C.S. Lewis

July: The Code of The Woosters by P.G. Wodehouse

September: I, Julian by Claire Gilbert

October: Kairos by Jenny Erpenbeck

December (including Christmas festivities!): The Life Impossible by Matt Haig

We are always pleased to welcome new members, and everyone is encouraged to invite friends along.

Kate Cheyney

Choir / organ

Overall, 2024 was a good year for our Choir. We have been able to maintain numbers in all parts, although a couple of additional men to strengthen the Bass line would be welcome. Having said that anyone interested in joining the choir would be welcome to come and see what we're all about. We are still keen to welcome students whilst they're studying in Birmingham. As always, the support and encouragement from Vicar Hazel and all the clergy team has been a great help.

At the beginning of the year, we were sad to say farewell to Susan Muthoni who left to take up a new job in Liverpool. In May, we sang for the Deanery welcome service for Bishop Michael. Also in May, several of our choristers went to the Great Hall at Birmingham University to support Cian

O'Dwyer who played an Organ Recital. There were two important celebrations during the year, in March Carole and John celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary and in July, it was Hilda and John's Diamond anniversary. In August we welcomed Beth who joined the altos. There was the Confirmation service at the beginning of November. December started with the Choir decorating a tree for the Christmas Tree Festival, then the Annual Carol Service, which many thought to be one of the very best we have sung.

We continue to sing our monthly Choral Evensong services maintaining a consistently high standard achieved mostly through good attendances at Choir practices. We are very grateful to Chris Stormont who comes to play the organ for these services with such professionalism, giving us the opportunity to hear voluntaries normally only heard at recitals. We are very fortunate here at St Mary's in having others who can play the organ, and I would like to thank Cian, George and Sarah for playing at some of the occasional services. In a year when Hilda and I have had a number of health-related issues, I have to sincerely thank Kate Cheyney for being a tower of strength to me and the choir in addition to her many other activities in our church community.

The Organ is still in the care of Pipe Organ Maintenance and Tuning Services, Paul Daly is retiring and work is now being carried out by his talented son, Ross, a very experienced tuner and Organ Builder who continues to ensure that the organ is maintained in excellent condition. The changes carried out last year have been most effective and have settled down well. I continue to be encouraged that St Mary's PCC judges the upkeep of the organ to be important in its many other priorities.

John Stormont. Organist & Choirmaster.

Church flowers

We continued to provide flowers each week during 2024, with the exception of the weeks which fell during Lent and Advent. A sponsorship scheme was introduced at the beginning of the year, in which Church members were asked if they would like to donate money towards the flowers on a particular Sunday, perhaps to commemorate or celebrate a person or special event. If the sponsors wished, a note to this effect was included in the This Week Sheet. This scheme has been successful and is to be continued. In fact the only funding available for flowers from now on will be via sponsorship. We try to be sustainable, avoiding the use of Oasis, and sourcing foliage and flowers from our gardens where possible. For a period of 4 weeks in late summer the flowers were entirely home-grown. We are a friendly team of 4 and if anyone would be interested in joining us they would be most welcome.

Kirsty Simms

Church Hall committee

During the year it has been possible to maintain the pre-school group, breakfast club and after-school groups, as well as a church youth group and other outside groups using the Hall in the evening, and ad hoc hirers of the Hall using it for activities over the weekend. This has helped us to be more self-sufficient financially, and this has been maintained through the year.

The Hall continues to be managed on a day-to-day basis. Essential maintenance work continues, including re-laying of slabs and repairs to the roof. The heating system continued to require interventions from the engineer, and the possibility of changing the heaters is being looked into. As part of the Hall security, the door locks were changed to security locks, to ensure that they could not be copied to enable the Hall management to keep control over who had access to the keys.

The drainage of the toilets continued to provide problems as they tended to back up every so often, and the pipework needed to be rodded to solve the problem. An initial assessment was made by looking into an inspection hatch which showed that the pipe draining the urinals was furred up with crystals, which was improved by the dissolving the crystals with an acid solution. However there was evidence that some of the pipes had been damaged, possibly as a result of settlement. The plan was to get a pipework engineer to pass a flexible fibre scope down the piping to see what and where the problem was. This had not been done by the year end.

The Management Committee considered their priorities for the year. Having spent the previous year focussing on fire safety, it was now possible to refocus on refurbishment of the property, which would also help to make it more attractive for hiring. The property consists essentially of three meeting

rooms with other rooms for toilets, kitchen and storage. The largest is the Sports Hall which was the current focus of attention, as the kitchen had been redecorated and refitted and was near completion, requiring the serving hatches to be rebuilt.

During the year the walls of the Sports Hall were covered internally with plasterboard to hide the bare bricks which were there previously. Also more cupboards were built at the end to provide greater storage space. Once this was done, the options for flooring were considered, and a hard-wearing floor covering was sought, with advice being sought from a local ballet school. Because of the desire to start a mother and toddler group, it was necessary to re-cover the floor of the Parlour (the middle meeting room), and this was done with carpet tiles, the overall result was well received.

Further lighting was put up in the car park area. There was further work done to increase fire safety, including the addition of an Early Fire Detection System throughout the building, and the serving hatch door from the kitchen and surround were painted with fire-proof paint to make them compliant with fire safety regulations. The fire doors were found to be difficult to open, which was resolved by replacing the intumescent strip throughout.

I remain grateful to Gerald Fage for his services as Hall Manager and continuing supervision of contractors working on the site and to the whole Committee (Pat Finney, Kirsty Simms and John Surtees) for their continuing contribution to the running and maintenance of the Hall.

George Harrison

Coffee mornings

During 2024 a number of coffee mornings were held to raise funds for Christian Aid. A total of £851.50 was raised including gift aid. These gatherings were held during the week, usually Tuesday or Thursday mornings and have always proven to be very enjoyable social occasions. Thank you to all who have held these events and to those who attended, without whom we would not have raised such an impressive amount.

Deanery synod

The Warley and Edgbaston Deanery Synod met three times during 2024/25 and there were several areas of interest discussed at each synod.:

5th June 2024 at Christ Church, Summerfield

- At the previous synod a presentation on the financial situation in the Birmingham Diocese was made. Following discussion synod prepared a resolution concerning the situation and the need for greater clarity at the parish level for presentation at the next diocesan synod.
- Following a presentation on vexatious complaints made against clergy, synod prepared a resolution relating to the current diocesan policy concerning such complaints for the next diocesan synod.
- A presentation was received on interfaith relations and the support available to parishes in their relationships with other faiths.

24th October at St Germain's, Edgbaston

- A presentation on climate change and our Christian response to this environmental crisis was received.
- Synod received an update on racial justice and the work being carried out at regional and diocesan level.
- The Archdeacon spoke to synod about the progress on oversight areas and the cultural changes which are leading to a greater collaboration between parishes.

25th February at St Michael and All Angels, Bartley Green

- A presentation on "Shaping Birmingham's Future Together – Edgbaston Market" was given to synod. The objectives were identified as a opportunity to (i) provide information about the services and support available from the city council and its partners, (ii) engage with council officials, partnership members and citizens and (iii) to collaborate and explore opportunities to improve community outcomes.
- The diocesan director of finance gave a presentation on the financial status of the diocese. Birmingham is the poorest diocese in the country in terms of investment income but is also one of the most generous. Expenditure is mostly on clergy costs.

- Synod's motion on finance from the last meeting was submitted to the diocesan synod but was lost. The motion on vexatious complaints was also submitted but discussion was deferred in view of the replacement legislation in the pipeline.
- Synod received a presentation on strategic direction to promote growth in the diocese. The themes to enable growth were stated to include structure and culture change to (i) larger deaneries with oversight ministers, (ii) parish growth and (iii) sustainability.

Richard Edmonds

Fabric committee

The Fabric Committee has continued to look after the fabric of the church during the year, ensuring that there has been regular internal and external maintenance of the fabric and grounds. Internal work included contracted church cleaning, organ tuning, and servicing of the photocopier, alarm system, fire extinguishers, bells and clock. Volunteers have continued to maintain flowers, floor polishing, silverware, altar dressing and kitchen equipment. This year a thorough clean of the floor was undertaken by a professional company and the floor was sealed. PA testing was undertaken on all electrical items and the lighting conductor was tested.

Externally, the grounds have been maintained by the City Council along with the support of a paid gardener, as described in last year's report as well as intermittent work done by working parties of members of the congregation. This included repair to the tarmac surface damaged by tree roots between lych gate and church, which was done in-house.

The gutters were checked during the year and have been kept cleaned. This included having the upper level gutters cleaned by Dawson Steeplejacks, who also replaced some of the missing roof tiles, but only to the level of the upper gutters. This is because they considered that the roof above that level was too fragile to work on without external support (cherry picker/scaffolding).

Another issue dealt with by the steeplejacks was to remove a tree growing from the inside of the old boiler house chimney. This growth was causing the upper part of the chimney to come apart and having removed the growth, the top of the chimney was secured with a band.

It was noted in the reports for 2022 and 2023 that the work on the boiler house had been continuing and that the Practical Completion certificate was released in 2023. In January the Building Inspector came to the site and reviewed the work done. It was noted that although there had been sealing between the fire door frame and the wall, this was only done on the outside and not internally. This work was done in-house, and the Building Regulations certificate was released in March. The project was finally completed in July after the end of the six month rectification period.

The report for 2023 noted that there had been a problem with dry rot affecting the floor of the south aisle pew platform. Faculty was obtained for this work to be done. This required removal of the soil in front of the air vents with building of surrounding walls to prevent the soil accumulating in front of the air bricks in the future. The floor boards were taken up and the rotten joints were replaced with treated wood. The floor was re-laid with air vents added to assist in ventilation of the space under the pew platform. The wall adjacent to the affected area was replastered and painted. This was completed in July when the Interim Certificate was released.

There was evidence of water ingress on the north aisle wall causing the paint to flake. External assessment noted a crack in the down pipe which has been made secure temporarily. The other issue was that there was damage to the north buttress which was in part due to the previous use of non-lime mortar which may have an impact on this. A schedule of work was created to include defrassing the buttress and adjacent area, for which Archdeacon's List B approval has been obtained. The work has been delayed in starting due to the inclement weather.

The ringing chamber was decorated in 2023, and this year the stairwell for the tower stairs was painted to match.

The need for an upgraded CCTV system was noted in the previous year's report. The testing of cabling was undertaken in January and the upgraded cameras were installed in May.

It has been necessary to replace broken light fittings in the drive during the year. As part of the aim to reduce carbon emissions, the nave floodlights were replaced with LED lights, as well as replacing old external fittings with new LED flood lights. It was noted that one of the nave light globes appeared

not to be seated properly, so all the globes were assessed. It appeared that the fittings had, at some time, been modified, and although they were safe, the globes could be more securely held in place. This has been resolved as a temporary measure by the use of silicon adhesive, but it is agreed that in the future, when the lights fail, the fixings will be replaced.

Further to our aim to reduce our carbon emissions, a Footsteps Assessment was made (encouraged by the Diocese) to look at how we could conserve energy more effectively. It was noted that there was a draft through the porch door as a result of the door spring not holding the door closed. The manufacturer is no longer making replacement parts for the spring, so alternative options are being sought.

A Temporary Minor Re-Ordering request was granted on 17/04/2024 to allow the children's area to be moved from the back of the north aisle to the south aisle with potential overspill into the south transept. This work was undertaken in house.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to all the members of the Fabric Committee who have given freely of their time and knowledge to enable this work to be done, namely Rev Hazel White, Kate Cheyney, Angela Lidgbird, Gerald Fage, Richard Lambert, Fr Jacob Pallett and John Surtees.

George Harrison

Health and Safety

Accidents or other incidents reported:

- Two falls on/around high altar raised dais, whilst changing altar frontals. No action taken, other than reminders to take particular care performing this task.
- Toilet ceiling suffered near collapse after leaking roof. This was made safe within a couple of days and is still awaiting roof repairs, before internal repairs and refurbishments

Work regularly carried out to prevent accidents includes:

- Gritting/clearing of paths during icy conditions
- Checking on loose masonry after storms
- Regular fire extinguisher checks; extinguishers fitted correctly in new places
- Loose tiles checked and re-mortared where required
- PAT testing of all electrical equipment in church
- Walk around church at least once (ideally twice) annually by church warden and health and safety officer performing overall H and S audit of premises

Other improvements/maintenance:

- Edges repainted white on remaining raised wooden platforms where pews stand
- Where necessary, Covid Health and Safety risk assessments have continued to take place e.g. Car Boot Sales
- Upper room, as well as other areas of church, tidied for safety as well as appearance
- Lighting improved outside toilet so pathway is clearly lit
- New CCTV system installed; trees pruned to allow clear sightlines for cameras; incumbent and KC trained in use of system; playback facilities have already successfully tracked activity of drug-users in and around church, enabling accurate reporting to police; community officers subsequently visited to check site on several occasions and moved perpetrators
- Sharps box acquired and in use when needed for disposal of syringes found in churchyard (gloves and litter picker used for tidying these items)
- Risk assessments completed for regular events in church (other than services) e.g. school visits, school services, concerts etc.
- KC has maintained first aid training and is a certified first aider for a further year (will renew when necessary)

Future/Ongoing improvements/tasks:

- Further lighting improvements to be made outside toilet
- Continued investigation into purchasing a defibrillator (ideally for public access, if not for church/hall use)

Kate Cheyney

Junior Church

Outreach to *Children, Young People and their Families* is one of the mission priorities for St Mary's. Junior Church makes up a significant aspect of this work.

During 2024 we have continued to have the privilege of supporting a faithful group of children and young people. Weekly attendance can vary, but the overall number of participants has continued to grow. Some members of Junior Church have grown up and outgrown this provision and these young people now attend the morning Sung Eucharist.

Members of Junior Church have contributed to the Parish Eucharist in various ways by participating in the dramatic reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday, leading parts of the All Age Worship and by being present in the sanctuary for the eucharistic prayer. The Christmas nativity drama was enjoyed by all, and contained parts specifically for young people. On All Saints' Sunday several of the members of Junior Church, who have attended for many years, were confirmed by Bishop James. This is a very important moment in their journey of faith and discipleship.

The PCC have been considering for sometime how to sustain this important outreach work. And having received a very generous donation the PCC decided to recruit a part-time paid Children and Families Worker. Following a thorough recruitment process a successful candidate was appointed to this part-time post. Sadly, the candidate moved away to a full-time job during their probationary time. At a PCC meeting in September the PCC voted to pause any further recruitment to this role until a later date. So, it remains the case that Junior Church is run by dedicated volunteers and without them it wouldn't happen. St Mary's is really grateful to all the volunteers for the hard work they have put into leading sessions on a Sunday morning. Junior Church has continued to use the comprehensive ROOTS teaching resource which provides good theologically reflective material for each Sunday. At the end of the academic year in July, Junior Church gathered for an end of term party and they enjoyed sharing in this meal time together.

I would like to express my personal thanks to the members of Junior Church for their willingness to attend and engage. They are a great gift to our church community and it is a privilege to support and encourage them as they grow in maturity of faith.

Kid's club and preschool

During 2024 St Mary's Kids' Club continued to provide wraparound care for children aged 4-14. The club is open before and after school and during school holidays. As well as indoor craft and play activities, the children enjoy outdoor activities including gardening. Their flowers and vegetables are admired by all.

PCC secretary

Meetings were held in January, March, May, July, September and November 2024. At the APCM in April 2024 we welcomed newly-elected members Jane Edgington, Joanne Goodall and Sarah Marshall, and in November 2024 we welcomed Edward Kane. Angela Lidgbird continued as a member of PCC in her new role as church warden.

The PCC received regular reports on Finance, including Stewardship, Fabric, Church Hall, the Diocese, Deanery and Oversight Area, Eco-church, Safeguarding, Young people and Junior Church, and Health and Safety, as well as a regular report from the ministry team. In September, the PCC welcomed the Head of St Mary's Primary School, who gave a presentation on the school priorities and explained the close working relationship between the church and the school.

During the year the PCC discussed Prayers for Love and Faith, agreed changes to the website, and agreed to appoint a Parish Administrator. There was also extensive discussion and action in three areas connected with outreach to children, young people and families: (i) children and communion; (ii) steps towards recruiting a children's worker; (iii) trial relocation of the family area of the church.

Susan Hunston

Safeguarding

Anyone needing to talk to someone about a safeguarding matter may contact the Safeguarding Officer (07736 667468), the Incumbent or the Associate Priest.

Safeguarding is of paramount importance to us at St Mary's. Whilst the safety and wellbeing of our children, young people and vulnerable adults is of course our first concern and motivation, we also recognise that, particularly in the light of all that has not been done well at a national level in this area, it is important that we are seen at a parish level to be extremely conscientious in our own safeguarding practice. To this end, for example, you will find the "Safeguarding" link at the very top of our newly updated website.

We continue to follow diocesan safeguarding guidance and procedures in all our parish activities, from recruiting new paid and voluntary workers, hosting one-off children's events or social gatherings, to running our usual services and events.

The parish dashboard, an online software package hosted by the diocese, enables us to track all our events and activities which require risk assessments or other PCC approval/involvement; it also flags up actions which need completing and policies which may need reviewing.

In addition to this, the dashboard, together with the parish hub, allows the safeguarding officer to keep track of DBS status of anyone requiring DBS checks, as well as to keep a record of training undertaken. All PCC members, as well as Junior Church leaders and others are required to have completed Basic and Foundation Level Safeguarding training, as well as training in Domestic Abuse. We have also asked all our stewards to undertake the Basic Safeguarding training.

Safeguarding is an item on every PCC agenda, during which its members receive regular updates on any developments. Anyone wishing to know any more about procedures and practices is welcome to talk to the safeguarding officer.

Kate Cheyney

Social committee

At St Mary's, social events are very important to us, not just in fostering a great atmosphere to establish and develop friendships within our congregation and their families, but also in the opportunity they present for the church to connect and forge links with the wider community. It continues to be our mission to reach out to those living and working in Selly Oak, welcoming them into our beautiful church for many and varied reasons, and socialising is definitely a good way to do this.

Some of the main events and activities which took place between January and December 2024 were:

January: Quiz Night

February: Lent Soup Lunch

March: Parish Theatre Trip to *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*

April: Spring Craft Fayre; Parish Ramble

May: Car Boot Sale; Wine Tasting

June: Music Sunday with Bring and Share Lunch; Selly Oak Festival

July: Car Boot Sale; Tea and Games Afternoon with Violin Entertainment

August: Parish Train Outing to Lichfield

September: Parish Ramble

October: Car Boot Sale

November: Music Quiz Night

December: Christmas Tree Festival

In addition to these events, we welcomed a record number of school-age children to our Easter Activity Afternoon in the hall in March, and in December a happy band of children and their parents/grandparents braved a truly awful day to attend our Christmas Activity Afternoon. This took place in church so that activities could revolve around the Christmas Tree Festival – but the highlight of the afternoon was our visit from Santa (who was blown to church on his sledge!)

Wednesday morning tea and toast has continued to be thriving weekly event; it is a great opportunity for that 10am congregation to catch up and also provides a warm space for anyone who cares to drop

in. Monthly coffee mornings continue to be hosted by different members of the congregation. The Knit and Natter Group meet regularly to do just that (whilst also looking out for each other in between meetings!)

During 2024, two other events which have become fixtures are:

Coffee Stop – every Thursday morning in the church hall after school drop-off.

Coffee and Croissants – for parents attending the half-termly school services in church on the last Friday morning of each half term.

Both of these enterprises have helped forge good relationships with school and with parents/carers who we might not otherwise meet.

As well as all the above, we have enjoyed a few extra fizzy celebrations in the form of hosting the Deanery Welcome to our new Bishop, Michael Volland; welcoming our new reader to be licensed; celebrating a 60th Wedding Anniversary in the hall, to name just a few.

2025 promises to be equally busy and sociable, with casting and the first read-throughs of our next dramatic venture – *Jack and the Beanstalk* – having already taken place in December this year!

Many, many thanks to all the people who offer their time and talents so willingly to make our social events happen – and to all those who attend and make them such a success.

Kate Cheyney

Stewardship

Parish Giving Scheme

We started the year with 36 givers, 5 people joined, 2 left, so we ended the year with 38 (33 gift aid) of whom 13 have opted out of the annual inflationary increase. Monthly donations at the year end were £3,213.68 plus gift aid £735.19.

Standing Orders

We started the year with 13 givers and ended with 12 (11 gift aid).

Monthly donations at the year end were £692 plus gift aid £173.

St Mary's Junior Club

Junior Club continued to meet on Wednesday evenings during term time. Members took part in games, crafts activities and sports, and took starring roles in the annual pantomime. Thank you to all the volunteers who support Junior Club and make its continued success possible.

Treasurer's report on the accounts for the year to 31/12/24

THE GENERAL FUND (UNRESTRICTED) had receipts of £90,232 (2023 £89,091) and payments of £91,159 (2023 £92,646), giving us a deficit on routine week by week operations of £927 (2023 deficit £3,555). This was covered by a transfer from the Deficit Fund.

At the year end the General Fund had a balance of £298,666 (including the value of the church hall £267,289).

DESIGNATED FUNDS had receipts of £23,289 and payments of £29,339.

Legacies & Memorials Fund

Receipts: various small gifts in memory

Payments: boiler house door seal £66, interior LED floodlights £1,848, architect's fee re dry rot £860, CCTV £3,380, painting bell tower stairwell £1,021

Hall

Receipts: £22,951 plus £3,000 transferred back from Hall Building Fund

Payments: routine running costs £9,420, property improvements £12,743

Year End balances totalled £112,747.

RESTRICTED FUNDS had receipts of £33,526 and payments of £29,971.

RECEIPTS

Organ: donation £30, fees £220

Drive: contributions to upkeep £300

Flower: donations £1,136, gift aid £174

Fabric: donations £12,432, gift aid £2,669

Youth: donations £10,050, gift aid £2,512

Curate's Housing: donations £3,000, gift aid £750

PAYMENTS

Fabric: Lights outside toilet block £450, lights by Philip Gough's gate £200, sound system £362, lightning conductor inspection £150, dry rot & plaster repairs £15,555, work on gutters, tiles and boiler house chimney £1,680, boiler service £488, fire extinguisher service £261, alarm service £80, inspection of globe lights £150, floor clean and seal £845, 70% cost of porch door floor spring £756

Youth: costs of Children and Families Worker and costs of Junior Church

Curate's Housing Fund: contributions to diocese for curate's rent as donor's wishes £3,750

Deficit Fund – transfer to General Fund £928

Other Funds – routine payments only

Year End balances totalled £56,031.

NET ASSETS at 31 December 2024 were £467,444 (2023 £470,866).

John Surtees

Website

From January to November 2024, use of the website was in line with previous years. During the year it became apparent that the website was not sustainable in its current form. It was discontinued and a new website was commissioned and put into operation in December 2024.

Electoral Roll report

The total number of persons on the St Mary's Church electoral roll for 2025 is 105 which is a drop from the previous 116. However, as you all know, this year is the 6 yearly revision where all electoral roll holders have to complete a new electoral roll form to remain on the list; in addition we inevitable lose some participants through leaving the area leaving the congregation or passing away. The breakdown of the changes is as follows:

- The total number of joiners is 20 (a big jump from last years' six).
- The total number of leavers (including those who have died) is six.

The majority i.e 57% of the congregation live in Selly Oak and Selly Park, 13% in Northfield and 9.5% in Bournville. The rest live in other parts of Birmingham such as Kings Heath, Edgbaston and Bartley Green and some live further afield. The very furthest parishioner lives in Wales

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY, SELLY OAK
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Stewardship	48,165			48,165	49,910
Stewardship tax	11,229			11,229	11,564
Cash collections	5,767			5,767	5,868
Donations & Grants	3,248		26,648	29,896	5,710
Gift Aid tax	2,125	25	6,105	8,255	2,413
Legacies & Memorials		313		313	1,924
Fundraising	3,747			3,747	2,376
Fees	5,300		520	5,820	7,509
Use of church	210			210	925
Interest	9,810			9,810	7,558
Social & Hospitality	631			631	512
Church Hall		22,951		22,951	21,825
Ringers			253	253	699
Total Receipts	£90,232	£23,289	£33,526	£147,047	£118,793
Payments					
Charity donations	3,000			3,000	3,000
Common Fund	54,000			54,000	48,740
Clergy expenses	1,311			1,311	2,298
Parsonage	392			392	261
Worship	1,128		202	1,330	1,305
Church running	20,457			20,457	25,662
Curate's housing	1,415		3,750	5,165	3,498
Repairs & Improvements		7,175	21,987	29,162	38,953
Education & Training	200			200	200
Staff	5,406			5,406	5,041
Churchyard	960			960	885
Administration	1,779			1,779	3,682
Flowers	293		1,701	1,994	460
Social & Hospitality	538			538	441
Fundraising	280			280	565
Church Hall		22,164		22,164	28,680
Ringers			300	300	1,832
Youth Children & Families			2,031	2,031	172
Total Payments	£91,159	£29,339	£29,971	£150,469	£165,675
Excess of Receipts over Payments	-927	-6,050	3,555	-3,422	-46,882
Transfers between funds	928	3,000	-3,928		
Funds at 1 January	298,665	115,797	56,404	470,866	517,748
Funds at 31 December	£298,666	£112,747	£56,031	£467,444	£470,866

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 December 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed Assets		
Church hall and contents	267,289	267,289
Current Assets		
HSBC current account	8,811	12,025
HSBC deposit account	0	0
CCLA deposit account	182,000	186,000
Church Hall account	7,820	4,032
Ringers account	2,487	2,534
Total Assets	<u>468,407</u>	<u>471,880</u>
Less Current Liabilities		
Childrens' Society	0	
Christian Aid	413	
Acorns	0	
Service fees	300	
Arcadians security deposit	<u>250</u>	<u>1,014</u>
Total Net Assets	<u><u>£467,444</u></u>	<u><u>£470,866</u></u>
Unrestricted Funds		
General Fund	298,666	298,665
Designated Funds		
Hall	7,820	4,032
Legacies & Memorials	<u>104,927</u>	<u>111,765</u>
	112,747	
Restricted Funds		
Organ	23,838	24,283
Drive	4,809	4,739
Flower	0	391
Fabric	3,583	9,543
Youth	10,754	223
Bereavement	417	457
Choir	1,233	1,396
Outreach	139	139
Deficit	4,042	4,970
Energy Grant	4,729	4,729
Ringers	2,487	2,534
Hall Building	0	3,000
Curate's Housing	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	56,031	
Total Funds	<u><u>£467,444</u></u>	<u><u>£470,866</u></u>

APPROVED by the Parochial Church Council on

and signed on its behalf by

Rev'd Hazel White
Vicar

Kate Cheyney
Churchwarden

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS/TRUSTEES OF
THE PCC OF ST MARY SELLY OAK**

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

As trustees of the charity, the members of the PCC are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility

- to examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners in section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and to prepare accounts in line with these records have not been met or to which in my opinion attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

signed.....

**David Loveday
35 Bristol Road South
Birmingham
B31 2GH
Independent Examiner**

date.....12-2-2025