



Annual Report 2024

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About St Mary's, East Barnet

The charity's full name is The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of East Barnet.

It is governed according to the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure (1956) as amended. It operates according to the Church Representation Rules (2022).

At the time this report was issued, the Parochial Church Council consisted of:

The Revd Dr Alec Corio (Rector, PCC chair, ex officio member)
Prof Alison Blunt (representative of the laity)
Mr Victor Chan (representative of the laity)
Mrs Bettina von Cossel (representative of the laity)
Mrs Margaret Cranfield (representative of the laity)
Mrs Katherine Duncan-Kerr (PCC secretary, representative of the laity)
Mr Stephen Edwards (representative of the laity)
Mrs Amy Jobson (representative of the laity)
Rev Abe Konadu-Yiadom (Methodist minister, ex officio observer)
Mr Roger Melling (PCC vice chair, deanery synod representative)
Ms Gail Phillips (representative of the laity)
Mr John Savage (deanery synod representative)

The charity exists to advance the gospel in the ecclesiastical parish of East Barnet, according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England, for the benefit of the public.

The charity cooperates with the Rector to provide and maintain a building used for religious purposes; provide and maintain a building as a local heritage asset; conduct public worship, including services marking life events; sponsor cultural and artistic events; support local community formation; support educational activities; further the ecumenical and interfaith engagement of the Church of England; and provide pastoral care to peoples of all faiths and none.

The parish church is located at:
The Church of St Mary the Virgin
Church Hill Road
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8XD

The parish office (for all correspondence) is located at:
East Barnet Parish Office
Brookside Methodist Church
2 Cat Hill
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8JB

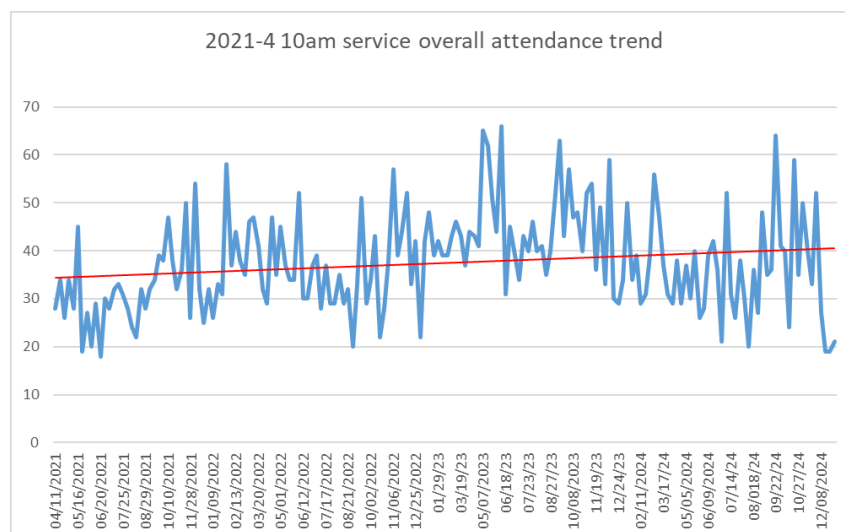
Website: stmaryseastbarnet.org
Social media: @smaryeastbarnet
Telephone: 02084414401
Email: administrator@stmaryseastbarnet.org
The PCC's charity number is 1143134

The Independent Examiner of the PCC's financial reports was Ms Victoria Neil of 30 Cedar Avenue, East Barnet, EN4 8DX.

Rector's Report and Introduction

During 2024, there was continuing slow growth in the size of the average congregation at St Mary's, though with a little more variance and unpredictability around week-on-week numbers than in 2023. There was also a small increase in the size of our total worshipping community.

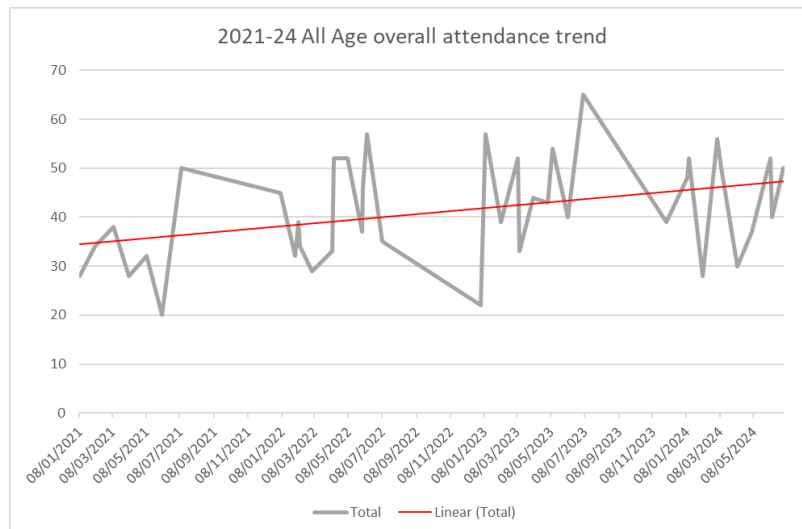
A chart of attendance at Sunday morning services, from the point when we reopened the building (permanently) for public worship in April 2021, reveals both this positive trend and the unpredictability of attendance in any particular week.



This seems to relate to a number of different factors. One obvious explanation is that some members of the historic congregation are attending less frequently than prior to 2020, and all ARE doing so on slightly different cycles, while still remaining connected to St Mary's. Another issue relates to the way in which a particular reasons for non-attendance (such as bad weather, illness, family time, or holidays) has a much larger impact on this form of worshipping community than on a more stable one.

Pastoral contacts and home communion visiting seems to have increased in 2024, as in addition to those whose health or personal circumstances have prevented them from attending St Mary's for a long time, we have been ministering to a number of people who have found it difficult to attend St Mary's during a shorter period of time. I am very grateful that I share in contact and visiting with the excellent Pastoral Group at St Mary's: Bridget Bowden, Brian Gregory, Helen Ball, Chris Mears, Roger Melling and Vincent Pereira. It was from the Pastoral Group that in 2024 St Mary's began holding a Coffee Morning on the first Thursday of the month. Along with the Sewing Circle that meets on the second and fourth Thursday of the month this is going from strength to strength. In 2025 I hope that we will continue to build up the visibility and sustainability of the Pastoral Group.

The most important factor relating to the range of numbers attending services is shown by the difference in attendance between All Age Messy Eucharists and Parish Eucharists. On average, 8 more people have attended each All Age Eucharist on the first Sunday of the month than each Parish Eucharist on other Sundays of the month; and as some members of the historic congregation generally do not attend All Age Eucharists, the potential 'gap' between numbers attending each of those services is even higher.



This highlights the fact that whenever there is provision for children and young families at St Mary's – and I think this applies whether it is within the main service, alongside it, or immediately before or after – then they are much more likely to attend services.

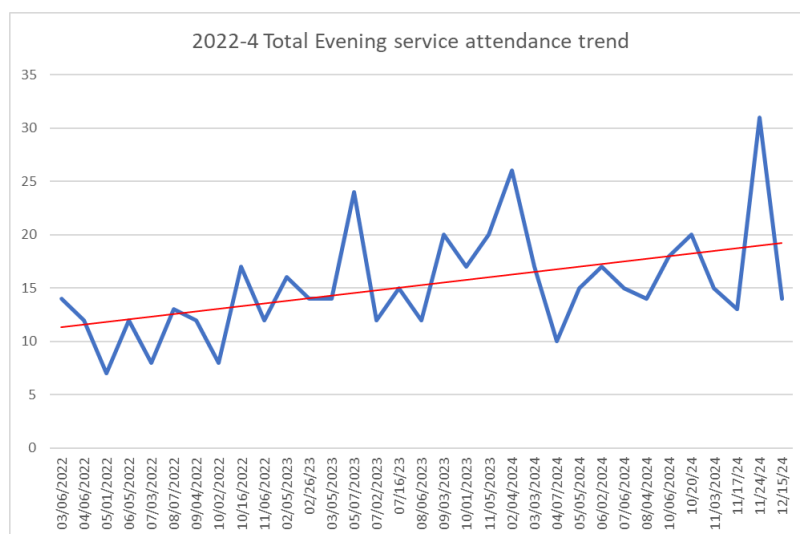
Though we have not been able to offer regular provision for children and young families on Sunday mornings apart from at the All Age Eucharist, we have held a number of very enjoyable Messy Churches at other times, in partnership with Brookside Methodist Church and thanks to the planning of Louise Sutton and Margaret Thompson. We have also been able to offer a series of afternoon children's parties at St Mary's as a very successful and enjoyable form of outreach to this cohort. Amy Jobson, Kelly Sykes-Fassett and Gail Philips have all proved enthusiastic and energetic in planning these ... and in helping me to encourage other volunteers to join in with our fun and games.

Attendance at Evensong has also been growing from the point when we reestablished that service on the first Sunday of the month in June 2022. Since October 2024 we have also been offering a new afternoon service on the third Sunday of the month: a Contemplative Eucharist with music from the ecumenical community at Taize. Alan Danson, Brian Gregory, and Kathy Gilbert all helped me to kickstart this new venture.

The introduction of this service came from a desire to offer an additional Eucharist that could be attended by people who find it difficult to come to a morning service at St Mary's. It has already proved a valuable form of engagement, because of its peaceful atmosphere; and a wider worshipping community is forming around this service. The liturgy of the Contemplative Eucharist allows us to use different forms of music and meditation than we can on other occasions. Both our regular evening services have increased the total numbers attending St Mary's on the first and third Sundays of the month.

This improvement in the worshipping life of the church involves a great team of deputy wardens: Roger Melling, Chris Mears, and John Savage; and many sidesmen, servers, sacristans, readers, intercessors, coffee makers, musicians, and choir members. It is very encouraging that there has been a growth in the numbers of those who are helping to lead our services in this way, and in the different voices we rejoice to hear during our worship – and that people do keep signing up for all the very many slots on the rota, which is now ably curated by Margaret and Graham Cranfield.

We have also welcomed some visiting clergy and readers to contribute to building up the vibrancy of our worship through their preaching and presidency, and I am grateful to Margorie Brown, Guy Hewitt, Iain Lane, Abe Konadu-Yiadom, Margaret Peart, Shaun Sanders, and Stephen Venner for their assistance.



In 2024 there has also been a very encouraging level of local community engagement with seasonal services. Though terrible weather limited attendance at the St Mary's School Carol Service, we experienced fantastic attendance at a shared service with Brookside Methodist Church and St Mary's School in the summer at the East Barnet Festival, where the school choir sang alongside the Church Choir and Young Voices. That was one of the last services that I was privileged to lead with Shaun, before we wished him a fond farewell as he moved to a new ministry among the Methodist churches in Walton-on-Thames. At the East Barnet Festival I was also able to coordinate with several local churches to offer children's craft activities in a joint venture, and Bettina von Cossell brought together a team to run a St Mary's stall, so that our presence as the parish church of East Barnet was also really visible there.

In the autumn a service of Choral Evensong in the same collaborative spirit between school and church completely filled the school hall. The relationship with St Mary's School seems better than at any point since my arrival in the parish, and much of that is due to the enthusiastic leadership of Maria Constantinou as headteacher, and to the role that Stephen Edwards as chair of governors has played in improving governance of the school. I have enjoyed continuing our weekly practice of holding collective worship services, now alternating between school and church. In 2024 we have also resumed holding a Eucharist in school each term, and I have been increasingly involved with teaching - now across all the classes of the school, and in 2 or 3 subject areas: from straightforward RE to more esoteric exobiology. My hope is that the fuller partnership with St Mary's School will lead to termly services shared between the church congregation and school community, and that we will more fully share in local mission together. More occasional contact with Church Hill School and Brunswick Park Primary School has also been very positive, and could be developed further in the future with additional resources.

I have also enjoyed some opportunities to help facilitate adult learning through the Book Club; a Lent lunch and course: On Prayer; a Bible Study Eucharist; a Teaching Eucharist; and a couple of sessions talking about Relationships between Religions, as part of a group for inter-faith families. In

addition, I have continued to lecture on liturgy for ordinands and readers in training on the Eastern Region Ministry Course.



Attendance at the Act of Remembrance at the war memorial outside Brookside Methodist Church on Remembrance Sunday seems to grow larger every single year, and the enthusiastic response of the Royal British Legion meant that we were encouraged to hold smaller services there on the Anniversary of D Day in June, to launch the Poppy Appeal in September, and on Armistice Day on 11 November. We also shared in a really enjoyable, and downright raucous, Community Carols event at the Legion in December.

Our Christmas Carols by Candlelight services were also an exceptional success in 2024, and more people attended this magical presentation of the Christmas story than have come to a Christmas carol service at St Mary's in many years, going back well before the pandemic. Many congratulations must go to Alan, and his ability to conjure up the atmosphere of the season so successfully in these services with his excellent Christmas orchestra.

It is also very likely that there was undercounting at some other Christmas services, like the utterly chaotic but fun Children's Nativity Service where children were invited to come as their favourite character from the first Christmas story, and so we can rejoice in the inclusive appeal of all our worship at that very special time of year. I am very grateful that Abe, my new Methodist minister colleague, trusted me when I promised that the Nativity Service would work out ... and that somehow it did.

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Christingle		55	76	89
Ash Wednesday		13	12	13
Mothering Sunday		32	37	47
Palm Sunday total all services		47	98	88
Holy Week midweek	32	50	35	53
Easter Day	36	99	104	113
Ascension	10	9		11
Education	49	51	63	48
Harvest	47	34	47	64
Memorial Service	59	88	90	53
Advent Carols	75	61	68	64
Christmas Carols total both services	127	185	282	411
Other 'Christmas' special services - schools, crib etc	35	430	574	435
Christmas Midnight and Day total	69	133	122	128

Unpredictable Sunday morning attendance on a week-by-week basis does make it slightly more difficult to prepare music, preaching and liturgy to suit each individual Sunday, and it does make it harder to build an overall sense of momentum toward the fuller flourishing of the worshipping life of the church.

If we wish to see further growth in our worshipping community into 2025, then we must all continue to be committed to faithful, regular, and frequent attendance at services, in ways that are realistic to our needs and our availability. The Church Council must also continue its work toward increasing the provision of regular activities for children and families at Sunday services. The Church Council has been making encouraging progress toward this goal in 2024, by developing a shared vision for such work and by beginning an application for a grant for a children's worker to be submitted in 2025.

Though we cannot afford the additional costs of a children's worker without a grant, St Mary's finances appear much healthier at the end of 2024 than at any time members of the Church Council can recall. This is thanks to all your regular generosity in your planned giving to the church, some very successful fundraising efforts coordinated by Gail Philips, and also, increasingly, to some commercial activities.

The really big difference in our finances when compared with 2022 and before is that we are now receiving regular rental income from 54 Church Hill Road, which was built on the site of the old Parish Hall. The build up of this rental income has allowed Roger to recommend to the Church Council that we resume full payment of parish share, and also make up our parish share deficit from the period when the Church Council paused parish share payments during the community halls building project. It is incredibly generous of Roger to continue to hold the role of treasurer, which he took on temporarily and is still fulfilling. In 2025 the Church Council must find a long-term alternative to Roger holding that role, engage in some more stewardship campaigning, and continue to advertise for regular community halls rentals to further stabilize our finances.



The Church Council's focus in 2024 has also been on completing and then refreshing the goals of our 2021–2026 Mission Action Plan. We can give thanks for some significant areas of progress, such as our Bronze Eco-Church award. In the second half of 2024, it seemed right to the Church Council to focus increasingly on becoming more intentional about growing the church through a shared spirit of invitation. Into 2025, that process should begin to bear more fruit, through more dedicated sessions within the Church Council and through a series of enjoyable congregational activities that are being planned for us all to engage in together.

The Church Council has also continued to oversee our flourishing relationship with Barnet Collective, who are now re-distributing food that would otherwise go to waste to about 80 families each week: those who are struggling, yet not eligible for Foodbank vouchers. The Church Council has also been kept fully informed of my work to encourage Barnet Council and the commercial developer of the North London Business Park to include an integrated well-being centre within this substantial development, and for local churches (including Brookside Methodist Church; Manodr Drive Methodist Church; St Mary's; and St Paul's, New Southgate) to partner in offering spiritual care to the estate from its premises. Disappointingly, a scheme containing this element was proposed and then was refused planning permission, at a planning inspectorate inquiry in the late Spring. Though the result of that decision has favourably limited the size of the development a little, it is proceeding now – and at present without this or any other kind of community service or space.

Amazingly, given his continuing dedication in the role of treasurer, Roger did manage to stand down as Churchwarden in 2024. At the Annual Meeting he was very touched to receive effusive thanks and some special gifts from the congregation to symbolize our gratitude to him in this role and to Heather for her support of this role. As we have been without a Churchwarden since that point, I have been working hard alongside the Deputy Churchwardens, Standing Committee, and Church Council to divide up and diversify some of the roles that are associated with the position of Churchwarden. Those who are now sharing in those roles are forming a strong team, and I am very grateful for all they continue to do as we work to build up a stronger and more collegial form of leadership at St Mary's. It must be said, however, that we would greatly benefit from 2 suitable Churchwardens stepping forward at this year's Annual Meeting. We also have not found sufficient

members to form a sustainable team to oversee the church's fabric, though there have been a series of successful Church Care sessions overseen by Victor Chan; Tom Hodgson has kindly been working to sort our alarm systems; Roy Mears oversees planned maintenance; Roger and John continue to do many things around the building; and there is an extensive team of cleaners. I also seem to spend a lot of time up the tower, or on the roof.



While many tasks from 'the great St Mary's job fair' are being completed by a wider team, I am also still bearing a very heavy load of administrative and communications work. Good communications work and targeted advertising is of vital importance in the growth of our church community, so that a greater amount of time is being spent on this area than ever before: from producing posters, to flyers, to social media posts, to revamping the website, to sending out News from St Mary's, to printing the pewsheets ... It's wonderful when other people do assist in this area, such as Margaret producing seasonal brochures, or a large proportion of the congregation distributing Christmas services invitation cards. Those met with a very warm response this winter. It may be that the Church Council will be able to return to employing a parish administrator in 2025, so that my time can be focused on other areas, and that so this work can be done in a more dedicated manner.

I would like to close the Rector's Report by expressing my thanks to everyone who is leading our community into a healthier future, and to all who help us to meet the challenges we face in our current lives, as we seek to follow Jesus Christ, together.

Alec Corio

Deanery Synod Report

Barnet Deanery Synod met on three occasions in 2024.

In February, Synod met at Christ Church, Little Heath, when Glyn Barker, the Director of Finance for the Diocese, talked about the 'Parish Share' and the future prospects for parish finances. The Parish Share is the amount of money each church is asked to pay the Diocese. The majority of this money in effect comes back to parishes by way of paying for clergy employment costs, cost of

clergy housing and training, and mission and ministry support to the Parish. Very little goes towards Diocesan costs.

Synod also met at St Michael & All Angels, Borehamwood, when Tim Bull, Director of Vocations at the Diocese, spoke about 'Callings and Vocations: Opportunities for Churches in the Barnet Deanery'. Tim explained the range of opportunities for lay people, not just for ordination.

In October Synod met at King Charles the Martyr, Potters Bar, when the Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Dr Jane Mainwaring led a communion service and then spoke about 'Working together as leadership and congregations of the Diocese'. Bishop Jane first offered her thanks and appreciation for all the work carried by volunteers in our parishes. Bishop Jane spoke about the impact of the pandemic, youth, children and families, diversity, safeguarding, and how important it is for all of us to talk about Jesus. The Bishop then took questions.

Our Area Dean for the last four years, the Revd Laura Hewitt, who was the Vicar of St James for nine years, has moved to a new post in the Diocese of Hereford. Our new Area Dean is the Revd Stefan Chrysostomou, Vicar of St Mary's, Potters Bar.

Roger Melling

Electoral Roll Report

The Electoral Roll is our list of all those entitled to vote on in elections to the Church Council and Deanery Synod. Anyone over the age of sixteen who resides within our parish or who regularly worships at St Mary's may join the roll.

Our 2024 Electoral Roll revision process in April 2024 showed a total of 118 names, the same as in the previous year.

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, our Electoral Roll is being deleted and a new roll started in 2025.

The notice of this complete renewal of the Electoral Roll has been on display on the church notice board since 5 February 2025. The new roll is open for applications between 5 April and 3 May 2025. Application forms are available in church, or online.

A copy of the new Electoral Roll will be published by 4 May 2025, and an overview included in the 2025 annual report.

Bettina von Cossel

Fabric Report

In January 2024 we faced a major flood in the church basement, due to the failure of the sump pump, and the church boilers were rendered inoperable. This was repaired, and costs largely covered by our Insurers, with the works managed by Roy Mears. Rectification works involving the electrical installation and pump were necessary to prevent this recurring. The boilers have needed.

Thanks to Paul Moon, an excellent ramp was installed in church to the chancel step. The accessibility of the whole building has been greatly enhanced by the halls project and this work. Other smaller pieces of work have continued on the building, such as safety works to the boiler house steps by Roger Melling and John Savage; the renewal of the entrance and welcome area, with clearer noticeboards; and the clearance of the vestry and gallery by a larger team.

Roof works to make the historic building fully watertight will be a key project for me into 2025, and the precise details of these should be further informed by the architect's quinquennial inspection due early in the year. However at the moment it is clear that they will concern targeted works on the point where the nave and chancel roof join, and other pieces of isolated work scattered across the church roofs. Once this work is completed then other work on redecoration, the sound system installation or lighting design would be possible without risking a leak destroying any further progress.

Following completion of our community halls building project, minor defects inspection and rectification works continued by our contractor, Ash, into 2024, and the halls were completely signed off by our architects, JBKS, in October. They have been in use throughout this period. In addition to these works, there have been works to the boiler and minor pieces of redecoration when needed due to wear and tear.



In the churchyard, there have been 2 tree planting sessions to work toward establishing a biodiverse hedge on the borders of the churchyard. The Church Care sessions have been very helpful in keeping some level of control over bushes and excess growth while avoiding limiting the churchyard's natural feel. The corners of the Garden of Remembrance have been marked, and the extension to the area brought into proper use. Two benches were installed thanks to kind donations from the Knitwits and the East Barnet Residents Association, and Barnet Council paid for the repainting of the lych gate. The maintenance of some monuments and the future restoration of others remains an issue to be resolved with Barnet Council.

Management of the School House has now been returned to the Diocese of St Albans, with the house in excellent condition thanks to John Savage's work.

Management of 54 Church Hill Road is in the hands of Barnard Cook as our agents, with outstanding issues being handled by members of the Standing Committee. The house is in excellent condition.

The Rectory has been completed, and I have moved in. There are a number of pieces of rectification and defects work for Ash to work through, and the garden conditions require a great deal of clearance. The overall appearance of the house is excellent, and it should be a hospitable home in the future..

Regular maintenance schedules are in place for the historic building and halls, with RVTV and Tom Hodgson overseeing the alarms; Roy Mears overseeing planned maintenance of the church; and a Halls Committee of the Church Council working to both increase commercial and community use of the halls and dealing with for wear and tear on the halls fabric. Victor Chan has begun overseeing regular Church Care sessions. I am very grateful to everyone who assists to manage and improve our beautiful building as a major asset in our mission.

Alec Corio

Financial Statements

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of East Barnet Statement of Financial Activities For the year ended 31 December 2024

			Unrestricted Funds		Restricted	Total	Total
			General	Designated	funds	2024	2023
			£	£	£	£	£
Income							
Voluntary income			79,679	-	-	79,679	77,207
Income from church activities			21,904	-	-	21,904	20,197
Interest received			2,554			2,554	2,137
Income for building project				7,854		7,854	26,873
Rent received for School House					6,300	6,300	8,400
Rent received for Curate's House			27,396			27,396	25,455
Total income			131,533	7,854	6,300	145,687	160,269
Expenditure							
Church activities			- 149,219			- 149,219	- 77,308
Cost of building the new church hall				- 2,978		- 2,978	- 138,847
Administration of School House					- 32,332	- 32,332	- 1,223
Administration of Curate's House			- 767			- 767	- 6,038
Total expenditure			- 149,986	- 2,978	- 32,332	- 185,297	- 223,416
Net movement in funds			-18,454	4,876	-26,032	-39,610	-63,147
Cash at bank at 1 January 2023			64,411	17,615	48,464	130,490	
Cash at bank at 31 December 2024			45,957	22,491	22,432	90,880	

Statement of assets and liabilities

						2024		2023
						£		£
Cash funds								
Cash at bank						90,880		130,490
Hall deposits held						340		40
Amounts owed at year end								
	Rent for parish office					610		

The balance on the restricted fund in relation to the school house fund of £22,432 was repayable to the Diocese of St Albans as of 30 September 2024.

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 14 May 2025 and signed on its behalf by the Revd Dr Alec Corio (Chair).



The attached notes form part of these accounts.

Notes to the accounts

							Total 2024	Total 2023
							£	£
Analysis of Income								
Voluntary income								
Planned giving							40,604	41,963
Regular donations							11,458	9,363
Other donations and grants							10,434	10,257
Bequests							5,000	-
Gift aid recovered							12,184	15,625
							79,679	77,208
Income from church activities								
Phone mast							12,750	12,750
Fundraising							4,358	4,060
Rental income from church hall							2,163	1,950
Fees for weddings and funerals (net)							2,634	1,437
							21,904	20,197
Analysis of Expenditure								
Church activities								
Parish share						-	115,215	- 23,510
Organist fees						-	9,840	- 9,700
Church running costs:								
Church services						-	931	- 2,035
Light, heat and power						-	8,549	- 25,692
Insurance						-	2,589	- 2,606
Repairs and maintenance						-	5,936	- 3,014
Organ maintenance						-	964	- 1,357
Printing, postage and stationary						-	1,780	- 1,221
IT costs						-	619	- 2,213
Telephone and internet						-	499	- 523
Rent						-	610	- 1,220
Subscriptions						-	351	- 167
Donations						-	112	- 56
Sundry expenses						-	867	- 3,635
Bank charges						-	358	- 358
						-	149,219	- 77,307

Designated funds							
These funds have been designated by the PCC for the building project.							
The movement of funds in 2024 is as follows:							
			At 1.1.24	Income	Expenditure		At 31.12.24
				in year	in year		
			17,615	7,854	- 2,978		22,491
Restricted funds							
These funds can only be used for the administration of the school house and the building project.							
The movement of funds in 2024 is as follows:							
			At 1.1.24	Income	Expenditure		At 31.12.24
				in year	in year		
		School house	48,464	6,300	- 32,332		22,432
		Building project	-	-	-		-
			48,464	6,300	- 32,332		22,432

Related party transactions

The PCC members are considered the key management personnel of the church. No remuneration is paid directly to key management personnel, although the church contributes to the diocesan fund and the incumbent, who has overall responsibility for promoting the whole mission of the church, is remunerated directly by the diocese.

Accounting policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 governing the individual accounts of PCC's, and with the Regulations 'true and fair view' provisions, together with FRS102 (2016) as the applicable standards and the 2016 version of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities SORP (FRS102).

The accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis as the income for the year is below £250,000.

The PCC is a public benefit entity within the meaning of FRS 102.

Fund accounting

The general fund represents the unrestricted fund, which is available for use at the discretion of the PCC members in furtherance of the general objectives of the church, and which has not been designated for any other particular purpose.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by PCC members for a particular purpose.

Restricted funds represent funds which are to be used in accordance with specific instructions imposed by the donors or which have been raised by the church for particular purposes.

Income

In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) donated services and the time spent by volunteers, of which the church is heavily dependent in order to achieve its aims, are not included in income as the economic benefit cannot be measured reliably.

Fixed assets

Consecrated and beneficed property is not included in the accounts in accordance with s.10(2)(a) and (c) of the Charities Act 2011.

Neither the cost of the new church hall nor the curate's house have been treated as a fixed assets. The church hall is attached to the church and title is held by the Incumbent.

The Curate's House, 54 Church Hill Road, is owned by St Mary's Church Hall (separate Charity Scheme) with the Diocese of St Albans serving as Custodian Trustee and The PCC as Managing Trustees.

Independent examiner's report to the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of East Barnet

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 1 to 5.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



VICTORIA NEIL

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

7 May 2025

Acting treasurer's report on the financial statements

Our annual income now exceeds our annual costs. BUT this is only possible because of the rental income we receive from the 'Curates' house and the mobile phone mast in the tower. The Church Council is very grateful for the donations made by the congregation and the gift aid we receive as a consequence [£12,000 in 2024] but it will only take small changes in our income or expenditure to put us 'in the red'. We do not have sufficient income to employ an administrator and as a result our Rector has to devote time on administrative work keeping him from more important pastoral duties.

It is therefore very relevant that I raise the question of stewardship, particularly in relation to financial giving. It is important that we all regularly review our giving. It is so easy to set up a payment that remains the same for years and therefore its value to St Mary's reduces. Many members of the congregation donate through the Parish Giving Scheme. The scheme includes the option for an annual inflationary increase, which is easily cancelled if necessary. The Church Council would encourage the use of this option and anyone who does not donate through the Parish Giving Scheme to join it. It is very easy and Heather Melling will give you every assistance. You may wish to consider helping St Mary's in the future by making a bequest in your will. Again assistance is available if required.

I would draw your attention to the following points in the accounts:

1. PARISH SHARE

At the time we were building the hall, with the agreement of the Diocese we stopped paying our Parish Share and then resumed at less than the full rate. During 2024 we paid all arrears and we are now paying the full rate of Parish Share.

2. SCHOOL HOUSE FUND

For many years the Church Council was responsible for the management of the School House. This responsibility has now passed to the Diocese. The School House account has been included in St Mary's main account. The £22,432, shown in the accounts will now be transferred to the Diocese.

On behalf of the Church Council I would like to thank Victoria Neal for again agreeing to undertake the Independent Examination of our accounts.

Roger Melling

Methodist Minister's Report

It's been a pleasure to continue to build on the work of my predecessors, Colin Smith and Shaun Sanders, in this, the 21st year since a Covenant between our the Church of England and the Methodist Church was signed and the ministries of our churches were mutually recognised.

I have had the pleasure of co-leading with Alec a series of very successful Remembrance Day and Armistice Day services, partnership worship and events, Messy Church, the Covenant Service, and collective worship at St Mary's School. I have also been pleased to join St Mary's Church Council meetings and ministry team meetings fortnightly.

At the most recent Partnership Enabling Group meeting, there was a strong commitment to the future of the partnership between our churches, with a desire to explore the churches understanding of our joint mission to the community. But all this is to come! As God becomes the centre of our community life, we will better use those things that we excel in for building up of the life of the Churches and our witness.

For now, I want to express gratitude to Alec for his support and guidance; for the support of the deputy churchwardens and congregation of St Mary's; for Maria Constantinou, her staff and pupils at St Mary's School; to the officers of the Royal British Legion; and last but certainly not least, to the Stewards and members at Barnet Brookside Methodist Church.

Abe Konadu-Yiadom

Parochial Church Council Report

The Church Council met on 4 February, 7 April, 8 July, 23 September and 18 November in 2024. The PCC also met for a Mission Action Planning afternoon on 2 June 2024. The council discussed current strengths at St Mary's, and where there might be opportunities for further growth.

In relation to this, the Church Council has held regular discussions on church growth priorities focusing on how we establish a commitment to growth, how we articulate that commitment, and what actions we should take to promote a growing church.

Following the Mission Action Planning meeting, the PCC met later in the year to home in on five Mission Action Plan goals. However, this has now been reduced to two goals due to the capacity of Church Council members. The first is to take steps towards the appointment of a paid children's worker. The second is to run a social course on to encourage a spirit of invitation within our whole congregation in 2025.

The Church Council remains proud of St Mary's membership of Inclusive Church and has asked Roger Melling, as a deanery synod representative, to share information about Inclusive Church within the deanery, which he duly did.

The Church Council has strong links with St Mary's School and receives regular updates on the growing partnership in mission with our School. An invitation has been extended to Church Council members to attend more school services.

Attempts were made to publish a short monthly update on the work of the Church Council in the News from St Mary's emails, but this was not carried through consistently. This may be something that can be revived in 2025. Minutes and other Church Council information is now available on the St Mary's website.

The Church Council voted to pay off outstanding parish share to the Diocese of St Albans, which had been paused and then resumed at a lower rate due to an overspend on our community halls building project, and to resume payment of parish share in full from January 2025. The Church Council voted to reduce the amount the Standing Committee's spending authority approval from £2,000 to £1,500 in order to maintain appropriate oversight of church finances.

Grant Fassett, Tom Hodgson and Angela Johnson have resigned from the Church Council in 2024. We thank them for their hard work and leadership. The Church Council sends its particular thanks

to Angela who brought the issue of Eco-Church to the attention of the Church Council, with St Mary's achieving bronze status, and also for her role as Church Council safeguarding lead.

Katherine Duncan-Kerr

Parochial Church Council Mission Action Plan 2024–2026

We have continued our reflection on the words of the Magnificat, and begun to meditate on the Beatitudes, to become more aware of the blessings we have received as leaders of the church of St Mary the Virgin.

Learning from the words of the Magnificat and the Beatitudes, we are seeking to become confident that we may speak words of hope and perform signs of service in the world, in order to share these blessings with our whole parish community.

We have therefore renewed our goals for 2024 and beyond, within the structure of our 2021-Mission Action Plan.

From the Anglican 5 Marks of Mission, the Church Council's related objectives within our parish, and goals for the 2024-2025 Church Council year

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom we will provide missional children's work in East Barnet by taking clear steps toward the appointment of a children's worker. The church council lead for this goal is Katherine Duncan-Kerr

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers we will provide an accessible opportunity to deepen discipleship by planning and attending a congregational course on church growth. The church council lead for this goal is Alec Corio.

These goals will be a standing item on every Church Council agenda, so that our progress can be monitored. Goals may be renewed in 2025. The Mission Action Plan will be renewed in 2026.

Partnership Enabling Group Report

The East Barnet Anglican Methodist Partnership continues, and we have enjoyed a number of united services throughout the year.

Courses and groups, and Messy Church all continue as joint activities taking place a number of times during the year.

The Partnership Enabling Group has met a couple of times in the recent past after a long period of hiatus post-pandemic.

At our last meeting we agreed that an annual partnership service should take place each year to recognise and celebrate the partnership outside of the times of any festivals. The first of these will be on Sunday 22nd June at St Mary's where the Bishop of Hertford will formally welcome Abe in her ministry within the partnership on behalf of the Church of England.

Graham Wheeler

Safeguarding Report

St Mary's is fully compliant with the safeguarding guidelines laid down by the House of Bishops, and throughout 2024 St Mary's has worked to continue to create a safe environment to all who attend our church.

The Church Council adopted the Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse policies which are in keeping with the relevant Church of England policies. Recruitment checks and safeguarding training are ongoing for everyone involved in leadership and ministry at St Mary's.

Safeguarding Sunday in 2024 was 17th November and it was rather disappointing that there were fewer people who attended that service than expected. On reflection, we need to 'advertise' this very important event earlier and bring it to the attention of more people, not only within the church, but within the wider community. We must all be aware that there are many forms of abuse, many of which cannot be seen easily. We must remember that often people who are abused, whatever their age or sex, are of the opinion that it is their fault or it is usual behaviour. It most definitely is not.

We need an open culture where abuse has nowhere to hide. We need to talk about it to ensure everyone in our church, and elsewhere, is aware of their part and how to be alert to the risks of abuse from within and outside the church.

It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to keep our ears and eyes open and to look after and care for each other in any and every way we can. As Jesus said: 'Love one another as I love you.'

St Mary's strives to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the church for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Please continue to be vigilant and report anything suspicious. Let us ensure we keep our community as safe as possible.

Chris Mears

Minutes of 2023 Annual Meeting of Parishioners
19 May 2024

1. The meeting opened with prayers and welcome.

2. Election of the clerk

John Hawkins was elected as clerk, proposed by Roger Melling; seconded by Chris Mears; there was 1 abstention.

3. Apologies for absence

Bridget Bowden, Roy Mears.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 21 May 2023 were approved as a true record. Passed with no objections or abstentions.

5. Election of Churchwardens

No nominations were received. Alec recorded his gratitude to Roger for his previous service as Churchwarden and for his courage in choosing to stand down at a time that he felt was appropriate.

Minutes of 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting
19 May 2024

1. Apologies for absence

Bridget Bowden, Roy Mears

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 21 May 2023 were approved as a true record. This was passed unanimously.

3. Annual reports: questions on the statutory reports

No questions

4. Annual reports: questions on the non-statutory reports

John Savage asked if it was correct that everyone had an opportunity to read either online or advance. Alec confirmed this was correct. Andrew Godleman made the point that it was disappointing that there wasn't at least a short summary of the reports and noted there had been few questions raised.

5. An addendum to the Annual Report on the church's progress in 2024 so far

Alec stated that we continue to predict a deficit for 2024 albeit smaller. We will soon be taking delivery of a card donation (tap to give) machine and will be making plans on how best to deploy this. It was Alec's hope that the Church Council would plan for a more dedicated discussion on stewardship.

Roger Melling provided a brief financial report. Anna Castiglioni mentioned the statement of accounts and noted that they require a minor change as a £10 000 grant should have been presented as being in a restricted account. Accounts were examined and signed off by Victoria Neil. Roger recorded our thanks for the generosity of the congregational giving and encouraged membership of the parish giving scheme. He explained that our finances are still such that we remain unable to employ a parish administrator. This has a major impact on Alec's time as he is covering administrative duties, and it therefore limits our ability to extend further support and engage in more outreach to the community.

A question was raised on whether installation of solar panels had been considered. Roger mentioned that a significant upfront cost was involved in this. Alec also mentioned that this was discussed early in the building project but at that time council policies would not have allowed it due to the building's listed status. It may be considered in the future.

Alan Danson asked how much over budget the halls project cost had been. Alec asked him to refer to the financial reports and statements in the annual report.

Andrew Godleman mentioned the Church of England energy footprint online tool. Alec stated that we had used this.

Anna Castiglioni asked whether we could use the restricted fund for the school house to fund solar panels either there or at church. Alec mentioned this decision would sit with the diocese now, as we will not be continuing as managing agent for the school house property beyond 2024.

Gail Philips asked if the energy standing charge would reduce in October. Roger mentioned that unit cost was going down, but not standing charges. Alec emphasized that the standing committee scrutinized all payments to keep our running costs to a reasonable minimum.

Gail Philips asked if there was a charities rate for energy providers and asked if not, was the CoE was putting effort into changing that. Alec mentioned the Parish Buying scheme which unfortunately we had not been able to use due to their quotes being higher than going to suppliers directly. We do access a charity rate of VAT on energy costs.

Steve Harris asked what the position was with the new Rectory. Alec was unable to provide a moving-in date but stated that this wasn't a large material cost to the parish. Steve mentioned concerns about the risk of damage whilst the building remained empty, and Alec said it would not impact the church financially should this occur. Alec requested that questions on the rectory be moved outside of this meeting as it was not something within our control.

Alec raised the question of lay leadership and volunteerism. Given the current availability of lay volunteers, some projects would need to be curtailed or paused.

Margaret Cranfield suggested that administration duties might be split between confidential and non-confidential work so that some work could be offered to someone seeking to build work experience. Alan Danson asked whether a request for help in this way had been advertised. Alec stated we had tried this, but had no responses.

Alec mentioned that the pattern of congregational attendance seemed to be becoming regular but less frequent post-pandemic, and so whilst there were positive signs of growth in the congregation's size, this was hard to visualize every Sunday morning.

Alan Danson mentioned limited commitment and attendance, particularly from children and young families. He mentioned that the only children at the last all-age service were part of the choir and urged us all to pray about this matter. Alec noted that many people are committed, but all our patterns of life have changed post-pandemic.

Andrew Godleman mentioned that he had been put off joining the reading rota due to the need to find a replacement if he was unable to attend on a Sunday he was due to be on duty. He asked what the costs would be of hiring a part-time administrator to carry out this kind of duty and assist in other ways. Alec replied this was around £9000 p.a. when we considered this in 2021.

Alec said he thought our engagement with the school was higher than at any point in recent history. The use of the community halls, the start of the sewing circle and recently introduced coffee morning were also high points to mention.

Alec said that average Sunday attendance was slowly increasing. Christmas and Easter service attendance were also consistently higher coming out of the pandemic. He mentioned our community was more diverse and more willing to speak up.

Andrew Godleman asked if any attempts had been made to engage with large local communities in the area. Alan Danson mentioned that he had ensured posters for our music events were well displayed to encourage outreach. Debbie Windeler mentioned the need for prayer for our wider community engagement.

6. Conduct of elections of representatives of the laity on the Parochial Church Council

Two nominations were received: Roger Melling and Alison Blunt. There were no additional nominations and both nominees were duly elected.

7. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

The meeting approved the appointment of Victoria Neil (proposed by Alec; seconded by Gail Phillips; unanimously approved). Victoria is a qualified FCA and lives in the parish.

9. Any other business

Alec further extended our thanks to Roger Melling for his service as Churchwarden, and to Heather for her support of this role.

10. The meeting ended at 12.30 with the loyal toast to King Charles III.

1374 Squadron Air Training Corps

1374 (East Barnet) Squadron of the Air Training Corps meets twice a week, and provides teenagers from 12 to 20 years with engaging activities relating to the Royal Air Force and aviation more generally. Night to night at the squadron headquarters, our activities can vary from classes about subjects related to aviation, to preparation for adventure training, to sports, to leadership activities which require the cadets to think of different strategies to complete tasks. Cadets also take part in a wider range of activities offsite and on other occasions. These range from shooting, to long distance walking (road marching), to camps, to completion of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, to flying and gliding.

As the squadron chaplain Alec leads a whole evening's 'Padre's Hour' on a monthly basis, and provides pastoral care to the whole squadron community. In the last year, Padre's Hour has focussed on themes including: Respect, Integrity, Service, Excellence: the values of the RAF; Having an aspiring mindset; Remembrance; Christmas carols; Lent: giving up and starting up?; and Appropriate communication and online safety.

Anthony Chan
Alec Corio

Assistant Churchwardens

Please note that this is the first time in St Mary's very long history that the Annual Report has not included a churchwarden's report – as we currently do not have a Churchwarden. Could you be one of our next Churchwardens? Please do think about it, as the role is rewarding and satisfying.

We three [sounds like a carol!] Assistant Churchwardens continue to work together to support the running of the church. We are very appreciative of all the assistance we receive from so many other members of the team, but it is not always easy to resource all the activities we would like to put on at St Mary's. Do you remember President Kennedy's inaugural speech? He asked '... think not of what my country can do for me, think of what I can do for my country...' Just substitute 'St Mary's' for country and you'll see what we mean. Don't 'hide your light under a bushel' because if you have just time or any particular skill please talk to us and to Alec. We will help you think about how you could help the church to thrive.

After all the difficulties relating to the construction of the new rectory, Alec and his family were finally able to move in last November. Moving house is never easy but we are relieved that at last our Rector is living in the parish and next to the church. We hope it will make life a bit easier for him not having to make that difficult journey from Bell's Hill.

The time and effort that many of you give is very much appreciated and we know that St Mary's could not function without it. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your prayers, support, friendship and love.

Roger Melling
Chris Mears
John Savage

Barnet Collective

Since the Summer of 2023 Barnet Collective have been pleased to be able to use the smaller community hall at St Mary's Church to receive a Thursday afternoon food delivery and for volunteers to repack this into individual crates for distribution.

Turn-around time from the receipt of the food to drivers taking it to recipients has become slick and fast, moving the food out as quickly as possible.

Volunteers have been consistently reliable in being at the church in time to receive and pack the food and drivers have been consistent and punctual with their particular round. Several recipients are also actively involved in the collective project, and provide the assistance necessary to keep it running week after week.

Collection of bakery produce and other food from local supermarkets is continuing, adding to the food available

Referral is through local schools, social workers, home visitors and local organisations.

Several Barnet Collective volunteers have completed their Level 2 Food Hygiene certification, and the offer to do that course is open to all, free of charge.

Plans are ongoing for a walking group, writing workshops, jam making and other creative activities.

Barnet Collective volunteers also join in with church activities either formally or informally, such as the sewing circle, coffee morning, and bring and share lunches. We are delighted to come to St Mary's and see the lovely activities happening there.

Several Barnet Collective volunteers came to a Sunday Service at St Mary's where Guy Hewett spoke to mark Black History Month. He covered the "anti migrant rampages" across England that took place in August 2024. From the pulpit, Guy spoke about his mixed racial background and his journey to challenge racist thinking. He talked about the slave trade, colonialism and linked these to what has happened in the West Bank and Gaza. Speaking of love as the direction of our lives rather than displacement, trauma and killing, he said that this value would allow justice to triumph over oppression.

Joe Tweg
Karen Kiil

Children's Outreach Working Group

In 2024 we held 4 children's outreach events at St Mary's, in addition to having 2 Messy Churches in collaboration with Brookside Methodist Church, and holding Local Churches: Craft, Play, Prayer at the East Barnet Festival with Brookside Methodist Church; Holy Trinity, Lyonsdown; St James', New Barnet; and St John's URC, New Barnet.

Our first children's part of the year was on Friday 9th February for Mardis Gras. At this event we asked for donations as opposed to selling tickets. Although it was very well attended and children and families had a great time, we made a small loss of £23.64 due to the cost of entertainment and food.

On Sunday 3rd March we arranged Arts and Crafts for Mothering Sunday, after the All Age Messy Eucharist. This was very well attended, with children of all age groups participating in card making, plant pot decorating, and gift making. We received very positive feedback, especially as we provided juice, biscuits and crisps for the children.

At the end of July the team organized a Barbecue and Fun Day. Attendance was lower than we had hoped for, though the weather was fine and the food was great. This community engagement event also generated a small profit of £161.94 for St Mary's.

Finally on Friday 6th December we held a children's party for St Nicholas' Day. We invited lots of local vendors, as well as having a local photographer offering mini Christmas photo shoots. We also offered arts and crafts in the smaller community hall, an entertainer in the larger community hall, and a second entertainer to wander around making balloon models. St Nicholas and his helpful elf also made an appearance. Thanks to a raffle with excellent prizes and a generous donation from Chas R Lowe of £150 for the cost of the entertainer this event also raised £932.38 for St Mary's.

Amy Jobson

Chipping Barnet Foodbank

Thank you to those of you at St Mary's who have continued giving so generously to Chipping Barnet Foodbank, either by donating food and toiletries every week, or monetary and warm clothing gifts. May God bless you all!

In the past year over 7700 people were helped at our Foodbank. With the increase in numbers and a 3% decrease in donations, the Foodbank has had to spend £1000 per week to meet growing needs.

However, the Foodbank has successfully implemented a 'client wrap-around support model' in order to assist people who suffer with food insecurity. This includes giving a holistic suite of support to clients, addressing the root causes of their situations, integrating services, client empowerment, and seeking a future without the need for emergency food support.

Unfortunately, Barnet Council withdrew their funding for the local Food Hub and it was closed in September 2024. This was a vital facility that provided fresh produce to our Foodbank and over 10 other Foodbanks in the borough. The Felix Project has kindly stepped in and done their best to help, but the fresh produce supply is not the same.

Despite all the challenges faced, this Foodbank we serve is a wonderful place that provides numerous much-needed services to the very needy in our community.

Debbie Windeler

Christian Aid

The annual Christian Aid week start-up conference was held at St. James, Piccadilly, in early March. There plans for the annual Christian Aid week in May were outlined and the featured country was announced. Following this event, various fund raising possibilities were discussed at St Mary's, and we decided to participate in the sponsored Freedom Walk in the City of London and utilise the red

Christian Aid collection envelopes in church. In addition, I arranged for a speaker with Christian Aid field experience to give a talk at church at a service to launch Christian Aid week, and a Quiz Night was held on its Friday to round off the campaign. These efforts resulted in a total of £542.86 being contributed to Christian Aid on behalf of St. Mary's.

St Mary's School also engaged in some shared fundraising during Christian Aid Week by encouraging children and staff to wear trainers to school, and the school has sent a separate donation to Christian Aid.

Gail Phillips

Coffee Mornings

Our coffee mornings commenced in May 2024. They are held in St Mary's large community hall on the first Thursday of each month from 10.30 to 12 noon. The sessions have been very successful with many people attending.

Everyone is welcome to come along for coffee or tea and cake and, of course, to socialise and chat. There is always a friendly buzz with people sharing in discussions, laughter and having a good time.

To those who join us for our coffee mornings, thank you for making them such a big success. For those of you who would like to give it a try, come along on the first Thursdays of each month and join in the fun. You will not be disappointed!

Chris Mears

Community Halls

The Halls team currently comprises Roger, Gail, Victor, and Alec.

Throughout the year, the halls have been used weekly for church events and hospitality after services. The spaces have been used for our own meetings, in partnership with Barnet Collective, to host the Sewing Circle, to offer study sessions, and to hold Fairs and Table Top Sales.

The halls have also been rented occasionally for private and commercial hires. The plan is to increase regular community and commercial hires.

To facilitate this form of halls rental and management, the team has updated booking forms; had photos taken and floor plans done; and expanded the group of keyholders. The halls are now visible on the church website and advertised regularly on social media. An advertising banner has been designed. Advertising in local print media is being explored.

To keep the halls in good order, regular indoor maintenance were conducted such as carpet cleaning, fire and electric inspections. A spring clean is being planned early in 2025. Externally, two church care sessions were conducted which took in the halls. There are plans to regularise these maintenance activities in the future.

Victor Chan

Fundraising Events at St Mary's

A wide variety of fundraising events were held during 2024. Commencing with a Table Top Sale in March, and followed by two more in June and September, these popular events raised £1027.93. A highly successful Plant Sale in late May provided income of £328.49. At the East Barnet Festival held in late June our bottle tombola raised £205.95. The Barbecue and Fun Day held at the end of July, designed as a community outreach event, contributed a further £161.94 to St Mary's. A fun filled evening of quizzing in November resulted in takings of £347. The year drew to a close with the annual Christmas Fayre which raised £909.60 this year.

I would like to thank the volunteers who worked so hard to make these various events the successes they were, and through whose efforts St Mary's benefitted by a total of £2774.96.

Gail Phillips

Music at St Mary's

Singing, praising the Lord with our voices, and worshipping Him through music are all important parts of the Christian faith. Coupled with the spoken words of the liturgy, live music is very much part of St Mary's church life.

The major festival services: Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter, Advent, and Christmas, have each seen an increase in those attending in 2024 in comparison to previous years. I am very grateful to Young Voices and the Church Choir members for their commitment and for singing for these services, and their regular leadership at the All Age Messy Eucharist, Evensong, and at our newly introduced Contemplative Eucharist with Taize chants, which takes place on the third Sunday of the month. If you are not familiar with these services, can I recommend you come to one of them to hear the good work these choir members do? The choir's vocal repertoire is determined by the resources available to us. If more members were able to join the choirs, there is no limit to what could be achieved in the future. The inclusion of instrumental and orchestral accompaniment has added yet another dimension to many of these major services.

Two additional events that took place in 2024 were a concert given by the renowned cellist, Pal Banda, who performed two cello suites by J. S. Bach, and in November; and Be A Chorister for an Afternoon, at which Young Voices joined by the Church Choir and some woodwind instrumentalists presented a programme which included many songs in their repertoire.

Alan Danson

St Mary's Sewing Circle

The second year of the Sewing Circle continued to enjoy excellent attendance levels, with sessions usually attracting between 11 and 19 participants, from a total 'enrolment' of 26.

Suggested donations of £5 per attendance totalled £1431.35 for the year, an average of £62.23 per session. From this, £120 was sent as a donation on behalf of St. Mary's to Tearfund's Toilet Twinning scheme, through which a latrine in Nepal and another in Uganda have been financed. Certificates are displayed in the community halls new loos. The balance of the money raised contributes toward the costs of the Sewing Circle using the halls.

Many thanks go to Alec for arranging for a group from the Sewing Circle to visit the Broderers of St. Paul's Cathedral where we were able to view their beautiful, intricate work, ask lots of questions, absorb professional advice, and get to wander through the lesser known parts of the cathedral up lots and lots of stairs!

Gail Philips

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

St Mary's Church of England Primary School has enjoyed a strong and growing partnership with St. Mary's Church, while also addressing the school's increasing financial challenges, over the last year.

Our school-church links have grown in quality and frequency, with regular, well-received collective worship sessions led by the Rector both in church and in school, and collaborative planning of schemes of worship and RE subject lessons. We have also increased the number of special services involving the school, with a second school Carol Service for the local community taking place at the church, a service of Choral Evensong held in the school, and a wonderful joint service held at this year's East Barnet Festival. We have been grateful for the musical support provided by the church's Director of Music, Alan Danson, in all of this activity.

The school has also deepened its links with other national and local communities over the last year, proudly participating again in the Barnet Schools Musical Festival and expanding the number of extra-curricular clubs and activities we are able to offer, including a successful chess club, choir and football club. We are proud to have deepened our partnership with the Good Samaritan School for the Deaf in Uganda, leading to the children learning sign language to accompany a biblical memory verse that changes each half term.

We have again run a "Hopeanuary" initiative, celebrating positive actions within the school by pupils at the beginning of the calendar year. The school has also pushed for change in our East Barnet community, with pupils writing to local councillors to highlight issues with fly-tipping, the Head and Chair of Governors hosting a visit from our local MP, and school children regularly collecting litter in Oak Hill park. We have also joined forces with other Barnet schools in campaigning, and have officially become a Smartphone Free school.

The school is flourishing in many areas, particularly in its strong connection with the church and its commitment to pupil development. Its leadership, governance and community links are all in a very positive position. The quality of education it offers and its provision to help all our children grow are well recognized. However, in common with other local schools, we face significant financial pressures due to the increasing needs of its pupils and inadequate funding. The school is actively seeking solutions through the development of new funding streams to address these challenges.

Maria Constantinou
Stephen Edwards