

St Mary the Virgin, East Bergholt Annual Report for 2024

**Annual Meeting to be held
on Sunday 13th April 2025
immediately after Morning Service**



**Annual Parochial Church Meeting of
St Mary the Virgin, East Bergholt**

St Mary the Virgin, East Bergholt

Incumbent:

Rev Chris Willis
The Rectory, Rectory Lane, Brantham, CO11 1PZ
revchris@constablebenefice.org / 07566 871270

Bank:

Barclays Bank
1 Princes Street
Ipswich
IP1 1PN

Register of Charities with the Registered Charity Number 1190273

Independent Examiner

Mrs B Evans
Rookery Cottage
Gaston Street
East Bergholt
Colchester
CO7 6SF

Website: [Home | Constable Country Churches](#)

Or via A Church near You: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/2067/>

Find us on Facebook: [facebook.com/stmaryseastbergholt](https://www.facebook.com/stmaryseastbergholt)

St Mary's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@stmaryseastbergholt2137>

THE DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION PRIVACY NOTICE

The information we hold about you in our Church records is only disclosed to those who need to see it for Church purposes. We will send you information related to the Benefice, the Church, the ministry and activities. If you wish to unsubscribe from all or any communications, please let the Benefice Administrator know at michelle@constablebenefice.org

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St Mary the Virgin - East Bergholt PCC 2024-2025

EX-OFFICIO	Rev Chris Willis	Rector	07955 329341
	Fiona Trott	Churchwarden	07791 294744
	Jackie Reeves	Churchwarden	07407 538450
	Sarah Southgate	Deanery Synod Rep	07742 620695
	Chris Jacob	Deanery Synod Rep	298552
	Koshy Jacob	Deanery Synod Rep	298552

ELECTED

TO SEEK RE-ELECTION IN 2025		TO SEEK RE-ELECTION IN 2026		TO SEEK RE-ELECTION IN 2027	
Glen Rowson	299109	Lesley Cherry	07543 644318	Howard Holdsworth	07970 416249
Geoff Potter	07745 536728	Reuben Rushen	299303	Marian Godwin	07745 117191
Vacancy		Victoria Rothwell	299980	Vacancy	
Vacancy		Vacancy		Vacancy	

PCC Chair	Fiona Trott	07791 294744
PCC Vice Chair	Jackie Reeves	07407 538450
Minutes Secretary	Steve Newman	07850 505713
PCC Secretary	Michelle Jowers	07955 329341
Hon Treasurer	Lesley Cherry	07543 644318
Deputy Churchwardens	Lesley Cherry	07543 644318
	Chris Jacob	298552
	Sarah Southgate	07742 620695
	Reuben Rushen	299303
	Geoff Potter	07745 536728
	Howard Holdsworth	07970416249
Electoral Roll Officer	Fiona Trott	07791 294744
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Howard Holdsworth	07970 416249
Standing Committee (Chair)	Rev Chris Willis	07955 329341
Standing Committee (Minute Sec)	Steve Newman	07850 505713
Standing Committee (Treasurer)	Lesley Cherry	07543 644318
Standing Committee (Wardens)	Fiona Trott	07791 294744
	Jackie Reeves	07407 538450
Health and Safety	Sarah Southgate	07742 620695
Lettice Dykes	Simon Rothwell	299980
	Reuben Rushen	299303
	Gill Rattray	298380
Preservation Society	Fiona Trott	07791 294744
	Sarah Southgate	07742 620695
Foundation Governor	Simon Rothwell	299980
Magazine Committee	John Gamlin	
	Geoff Potter	07745 536728
	Lesley Cherry	07543 644318
Ecumenical Committee	Dorothy Brundell	298607
	Chris Jacob	298552
Captain of Bells	Terry Eagle	07578 002974

Agenda for APCM

13th April 2025 at St. Mary the Virgin, East Bergholt
Held after the 10:00 service

1. Welcome and Prayer
2. Minutes of the APCM 24th April 2024
3. Electoral Roll report
4. Report on the proceedings of the PCC
5. Approve the Treasurer's report and accounts
6. Report on the proceedings of Deanery Synod
7. Safeguarding report
8. Elections:
9. Churchwardens
10. Deanery Synod: Three representatives for three years
11. PCC: Four representatives for three years, one for two years and one for one year
12. Appoint an Independent Examiner – Mrs Britt Evans has indicated her willingness to continue
13. Receive all other reports

The PCC will convene at the close of the APCM to elect Officers and deal with any urgent business.

AGENDA FOR PCC MEETING TO FOLLOW THE APCM

Election of PCC Officers

- Chair and Vice Chair
- Minutes Secretary
- PCC Secretary
- Brantham PCC representative
- Hon Treasurer
- Deputy Churchwardens
- Electoral Roll Officer
- Benefice Safeguarding Officer
- Health and Safety
- Standing Committee ((Rector, Vice Chair, Wardens, Health and Safety, and Treasurer)
- Lettice Dykes
- Preservation Society
- Foundation Governors
- Magazine Committee: currently Barnaby Page, Lesley Cherry, Alison Jones, Marion Ralph, John Gamlin and Geoff Potter
- Ecumenical Committee Representatives

Dates of East Bergholt PCC meetings for 2025:

Rector's Report

Rector's Report for Constable Country Benefice Churches of Bentley, Brantham, East Bergholt and Tattingstone.

The following report is framed within the broader Diocesan vision called '**Growing in God**':

- ❖ Growing in Depth
- ❖ Growing in influence
- ❖ Growing in number
- ❖ Growing younger

This is also a reflection on my first year of ministry in the Benefice, and the emphasis is on what has happened, rather than aspirations and vision for the future. That future focus will be covered in a subsequent '**Plan for Growth**', to be prayerfully developed in consultation with the wider ministry team and four PCCs, and indeed, the whole congregation.

Looking back over the last year:

The first and most important thing to highlight, is what a privilege it has been to join you [the four parishes]. You have made Rachel and I incredibly welcome. You have included us and embraced us in fellowship and friendship. You have been and are the people who were so poignantly described in the Parish Profile, which encouraged us to discern with you whether we were being called to ministry here at Constable Country Benefice.

We are very pleased we have been called here. I say we, as whilst I [Chris] am the minister, Rachel finds herself in one of those strange roles, where she also personally has invested in the obedience to answer the call to move home, support me, bear with the moments of difficulty and pain which inevitably occur in and around church ministry and have that ever odd title 'the Rector's wife'! (we're still working out what that actually means along with every other ministry couple!)

Our first year has been spent trying to prayerfully look, understand, see what is valued, what works (realising that is very subjective) and what doesn't (the same applies).

We have grieved deeply at the loss of some dear people, not least Peter Day, and I find it incredible how much I miss him and his gifting even though I knew him such a short time.

The tragic attack and murder of Anita Rose hit Rachel and I, and indeed Isobelle very hard, living so close to the location of her attack and finding ourselves in the centre of the media interest. In one terrible moment, in kind with the rest of the community, what had been an idyllic place to live, ceased to be so for a long time. but of course, we recognise that our shock and the impact the event had, so close to the Rectory, and therefore our home, is nothing compared to that of Anita's lovely family, who I have had the privilege to get to know a little, and support as much as has been possible.

Managing the media interest, liaising with the police, trying to be pastoral to the community came very soon after we arrived. As tragic as this is, I could see how God uses the threads of our lives and our previous experiences for good when evil occurs, with my insight into policing, and previous professional experiences placing me in a peculiarly prepared place to respond as well as is possible.

But this year has also been a year of joys, some of which I share with you below. This Rector's report does not major on the regular acts of worship, instead looking more to what has been new, but I must highlight also how incredibly grateful I am for all who contribute in so many ways to the daily lives of our four parishes and our weekly worship. I am reticent to name individuals. The list would be long, but I fear inevitably missing someone and causing unintended offence. So please rest assured, whether you are a licensed member of clergy, Lay Elder, Warden, Administrator or that particular person who quietly, almost unnoticed, faithfully serves every month – thank you. You are amazing!

So, the rest of this report focusses upon what has happened, particularly what has been new to the Benefice. It is intended to be missional in its presentation – looking at how what we do relates to 'Growing in God'. So, at the end of each section, I ask the question 'how does this relate to Growing in God' and offer an answer to that question.

So here goes.....

Occasional Offices: Naturally, there are many tasks and responsibilities which the Incumbent carries out. In the last year I have taken over thirty funerals or interments, and in many cases continued to offer ongoing pastoral care to families and bereaved. I have married three couples, spending time with them prior to their wedding in preparation, not just for the wedding service, but also their future married lives, and currently am doing the same with eight other couples who are due to marry in 2025/26. There have also been a number of infant baptisms and I have had a number of enquiries which are being progressed.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - growing in influence

Rotas: One of the earliest opportunities presented to help us be more efficient - was to move from a repeated planning process, which meant starting rotas from scratch month by month to a regular pre-planned model. The aim has been to reduce administration, with the aspiration to free up time which could then be spent on mission.

The principle followed is best presented as 'trellis and vine'. The idea being that very easily we [the church] can spend a lot of time on administrative and practical tasks (represented by the Trellis) which leaves little time for the nurturing of the vine. The vine of course is where the fruit eventually comes from, and the trellis is simply a vital, but non-living framework.

So, the new rotational rota was produced in consultation with all those who lead services and the PCCs. It means that the rota is pre-populated with who is leading, and any gaps arising – e.g. someone going on holiday - are then addressed, rather than creating a new rota month by month, which has proved a huge time saving for Michelle (Administrator), myself, and indeed all those involved.

The new rota is not without its weaknesses. One being that I [Chris] never get to be in a service led by other ordained clergy from the ministry team. But overall, with a few procedural tweaks – not least recognising the needed for lay-led service leaders to have better clarity as to when they are leading – which has been addressed - it has proven to be a great time saving and efficient model. I also suspect that those on the rota have often prioritised their particular dates, which in turn has kept changes to a minimum. A massive thank you is deserved to all those who regularly lead our services, both lay and ordained clergy. Thank you!

How does this relate to Growing in God? - this change is preparatory, affording us more time to focus on mission, rather than function. The vine, rather than the trellis.

Communion: when I first arrived, I noticed that some people were abstaining from one or both elements of the communion. There was clearly a remaining anxiety following the Covid pandemic.

A period of consultation followed where all those in the benefice were invited to share their preference and/or concerns.

What followed was a change to the way we share communion at both Brantham and East Bergholt* - with communion being served by both intinction (dipping of the wafer into the wine by the minister), and also the shared cup. These happen side by side, so the essence of sharing communion together is preserved.

This has afforded everyone the opportunity to fully share in the communion, which is so central to our expression of faith.

*Note – Tattingstone and Bentley had already begun using intinction only – and that has remained unchanged subject to any request being made locally for a shared cup.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - this change is foundational to being a welcoming and loving faith community - ready to welcome others to grow in faith/grow in number.

Pastoral Care: in an ideal world, the ordained minister will have capacity to conduct most pastoral visiting. With four parishes, that is clearly a significant demand, especially with an aging congregation.

Whilst I do make numerous pastoral home visits, including to hospitals, hospices and care homes, and also meet regularly with others exploring their own vocation, it was clear that pastoral care could not be (and indeed had not been before my arrival) the sole responsibility of the incumbent.

I am delighted that Sarah Southgate has taken on the new role of 'Pastoral Care Co-ordinator', not to be 'the' pastoral visitor (although she does make many pastoral visits), but to have an overview of the pastoral needs across the Benefice, to ensure that no-one is neglected, and supporting those who do make pastoral visits.

This is about loving those who may no longer find it easy to attend church services, who may therefore:

- a) need a lift to church
- b) home communion
- c) the delivery of a Pew sheet, or
- d) just a caring visit.

Much of this loving relational support happens naturally and is quietly provided by many in the Benefice - but having Sarah in this role, means that we can do our very best, working with myself and others, to make sure that all in our church, particularly those who may be less visible, are cared for and loved.

I am very grateful also to all those who provide this level of care and love to those in our four parishes.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - Growing in Influence and Growing Deeper

Schools: it has been a real joy to have such good relationships with the local schools. I am so grateful for all those who invest time as school governors. Three of our primary schools (Tattingstone, Bentley and East Bergholt) are Voluntary Controlled Church of England Schools, whilst Brantham is an academy, but not formally affiliated to the church.

It has been a privilege to go into each of the voluntary controlled schools – most term months, to lead faith assemblies, sing and teach songs using my guitar, and tell animated stories helping children to reflect on their half-termly chosen *value*. I love nothing more than to help the children reflect upon the *values* using bible stories and a song linked to that story.

Prior to my arrival there had been limited opportunity to visit Brantham Primary school to take an assembly, but I am delighted to have been invited once a term, and hope that our relationship of trust with the school will grow and grow.

Last year I took part in the career's day at the High School in East Bergholt. It was great to spend time encourage the pupils as they consider their possible career path.

It has been such a privilege to be so welcomed into the High School, and I look forward to taking five assemblies in one week for all year groups before Easter.

Chaplain – one of the highlights of the last year has been the introduction of a Chaplain (Philip Morphy) to the High School. This followed prayer and fund raising led by a multi-denominational group which I had been kindly invited to join prior to my licensing (once the group knew I was on the way!)

Open the Book – is a wonderful tool to take the bible into the schools, and the OTB team, led by Ruth Bull has gone from strength to strength, with dramatized bite size illustrations of bible stories. Thank you to the team who commit to OTB, and for those looking to provide OTB to the other schools.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - Growing in influence/Growing younger.

Connect: connect has been a real highlight for me personally – not least as it has been so warmly received by so many.

Connect – designed and named as we seek to 'connect with each other, God and the community', provides a place where together we can explore and demonstrate different ways of worshipping, with the aim of blending the best of new and modern styles of worship, and in doing so to make inviting people to church an easier task.

Connect does not replace our week by week more traditional liturgical worship but provides a wonderful opportunity to gather as one Benefice. A key benefit of Connect for me [Rev Chris] is how much more I get to see everyone – almost doubling those opportunities each month. Before Connect I did feel like a repeated visitor to four parishes, now I feel fully connected too!

A lot of work goes into making Connect happen - and the small Connect Planning Team, representing each parish, have been amazingly committed and done so much to make this monthly service a success, and the wonderful welcome and hosting, and service of those involved in so many ways has been a joy to be part of.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - Growing Deeper/Growing in number (and I hope as we develop Connect – ‘growing younger’)

Youth Group: one of the absolute highlights of the year has been the forming of a Benefice Youth Group, for 13-15yr olds (ish). After a number of young people came to our summer taster evening, we have settled as a small group of six young people, both boys and girls, and whilst having capacity for more to join, the small group have got to know each other, enjoying fun games, snacks, finding out something each week about the Bible, with discussions and activities - and also, a trip to 10-pin bowling! We look forward to the lighter and warmer evenings – so we can be outside. I must make a particular mention and express huge thanks to Len & Issy Smith who have led the group – which is available to youth across the Benefice - and put so much energy into planning evenings and events.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - Growing Younger

Alpha: Alpha is a course known internationally, based upon an 11-week series using good quality thought provoking videos followed by open conversation. Alpha is intended particularly to be suitable for those either with no current faith, or new to faith, but is also excellent for those of us who have been in the church for a while and want to ask the big questions in life in a Christian context.

We have two groups running at the time of writing – Tuesday mornings and Wednesday evenings, with fifteen people meeting over the two separate sessions.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - Growing Deeper (in faith/understanding) and Growing in Number (although it needs to be stressed that Alpha does not presume that those attending must change their view of or adhere to any faith as a result. That clearly is the choice of the individual).

Morning prayer: this has been an absolute joy for me, as each Thursday morning, a small, but faithful core group, regularly added to by others, gather together to pray for one hour at the rectory – always with a tea or coffee served – and even sometimes pastries!

Using the CofE Morning prayer, we pray together, share scripture readings, and in a freer time of open prayer – pray for each other (*in the room* prayer) and then for mission (*out of the room*).

I am also mindful that a small but faithful group also meet each Saturday morning at St. Michaels Brantham to pray for half an hour and have sought God’s will to be done.

The truth is, that without prayer, nothing else we do is likely to be fruitful, or indeed to ‘grow’. For some reason God invites us into relational interaction and to join him in seeking his Kingdom to come through prayer. This [Thursday] group is therefore a real joy – and I am so very grateful for all who give up this hour each week, and indeed the folk who met to pray each Saturday morning.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - everything – nothing – growing deeper, younger, in influence or number is likely without prayer.

Safeguarding: I am very grateful to all four parish safeguarding Officers for their willingness to take on this incredibly vital and central role.

The national church has sadly found itself in some deeply sad and tragic circumstances over recent years, and we must all do all we can to protect everyone in the church and those who we have any contact with from abuse or harm, especially the most vulnerable amongst us, including children.

To support this vital work, I am now meeting with the four safeguarding offices termly as a group, so that together we can share good practice, enhance our individual and corporate understanding of safeguarding and ultimately do all we can to protect all those we are called to love from harm.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - 'growing in influence' – by ensuring that our churches are the safest places we can achieve. In fact, safeguarding is foundational to every part of our Growing in God and ministry.

Growth Group: this year we also established our first growth group; a group of people meeting once a week in a home setting, for fellowship, laughter, supporting one another in prayer and practically, and having time to study the Bible together.

It is my hope that more Growth Groups will be formed as we journey ahead together, so that we can grow deeper in faith and fellowship as a benefice.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - 'growing deeper'.

The Gathering: well, this one is a bit of a *stop press* entry; as the first 'Gathering' was only this month. The Gathering is simply a time of some gifted musicians from the East Bergholt congregation, joined by Rachel and me, leading a time of sung worship played in a contemporary style.

On the first occasion 20 folk gathered, enjoying the sung worship, a short address/reflection in a more conversational style, and fellowship with tea & cake.

Based at the West End, St. Mary's, East Bergholt, and facilitated and led by the East Bergholt musicians, this is offered as a Benefice opportunity to worship; particularly, but not exclusively, with the young [*at heart*] in mind, or indeed those who prefer contemporary styles of worshipping.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - Growing in number/growing deeper/growing younger

Media and communication: for the last six months I have been preparing a weekly blog (most weeks) which is circulated to all those who receive the weekly Pew Sheet. My hope has been to encourage and inform, to highlight some of the things which are happening and to share biblically based reflections. In addition, I have been actively seeking to provide a regular article to all four parish magazines.

How does this relate to Growing in God? - growing in influence/growing deeper.

Working towards Benefice: several supporting decisions have been actioned in the last year to reflect our formation into a new four parish benefice. The first is that the 'wider ministry team' meet bi-monthly to discuss ministry matters. This team comprised of Lay Elders, Wardens, Readers and Clergy. And on the alternate months the Wardens meet with me as an interim *Benefice Council**. Naturally the PCCs in each parish still conduct much of the day to day running of the parish churches, and much vital work.

*The formation of a Benefice Council is in preparation to the formal and legal formation of the Benefice, which is yet to be concluded.

I reach the end of this report very mindful that it is impossible to reflect fully everything which the last year has held, either for the Benefice, individual Parishes, or Rachel and myself. I hope you can see that I have sought to present an *overview* of the key aspects of the work I have personally been

involved in as Rector, rather than prepare a report covering the whole life of the church – others will be preparing specific topical reports too, and whilst I have not sought to embrace everything that happens in the benefice which I have not had a personal involvement in, for instance: lunches, Men's breakfasts, Lent Groups, major fundraising initiatives such as the Lottery bid at East Bergholt (Fiona and Jackie what energy you have invested – thank you so much!!), concerts and shows, Easter bonnet competitions, teddy bear parachute jumps, walk and chalk, wonderful Pioneer/family at church joint services in the Rectory garden. The list goes on and on – and the more I allow time to write, the more I am amazed at how much we together are doing and achieving – and please forgive me for the many, many, activities and acts of service I have not mentioned specifically – but please know, I really value what you each do – seen and unseen.

So, thank you. I hope this, my first Rector's report at Constable Country Benefice, provides a suitable overview, and specifically highlights some of what is new, which will hopefully either prepare us, or already be helping us to 'Grow in God' together in the years to come – God willing.

God bless you all

Rev. Chris Willis – Rector

Electoral Roll

Every six years we are legally expected to completely revise the electoral roll. 2025 is such a year. Thank you to everyone who has completed a form again. Precise details of numbers on this year's Electoral Roll will be shared at the APCM.



*Fiona Trott
Electoral Roll Officer*

Proceedings of the East Bergholt PCC

During 2024 the EB PCC held a total of nine meetings including the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (two of which were held virtually). On average, there were 10 members present at each of these meetings. The items discussed at the meetings covered a wide variety of areas which included: supporting Chris in his new ministry and reviewing the new service patterns and services; obtaining funds from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for roof repairs; reviewing the church policies; applying for various national church funding opportunities such as Give to Go Green and the minor building repairs grant; keeping the church in a sound financial position; and a wealth of issues covering the upkeep of the fabric of the church.

Discussions at the PCC meetings continued to be carried out in a friendly, constructive, diligent and supportive manner, and there was a genuine spirit of cooperation and a wish to do the best for the benefice.

We would like to send our thanks to Steve for all his dedicated work as minute secretary.

On behalf of the PCC Minutes Secretary

Take a Break coffee mornings (“knit and knatter”)

Take a Break coffee mornings (incorporating “Knit and Knatter”) continue to run on the first Wednesday of the month from 10.00-12.00 am. This was changed from the last Wednesday in the month to follow on from communion, enabling people to stay on for a coffee if they wish.

Numbers usually range from 6-12 people with both men and women attending. Several people bring their knitting to do during the morning. Occasionally coaches/people holidaying in the area visit the church and come in for coffee and cake.

Sue Basted

Treasurer’s Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

General Fund

The General Fund income has recovered a little after last year’s fall to the lowest since I have been treasurer. It is still about 10% lower than pre covid levels.

- Due to a reduction in the number of services one off giving and collections are down.
- Donations have recovered slightly.
- Income from the bookstall has once again seen a marginal increase.
- The PCC continues to cut costs wherever possible.
- Largest expense continues to be the Parish Share, although we are benefitting from a significant reduction since joining with Bentley and Tattingstone.

We prepare our accounts on a receipts and payments basis, which means that accruals and adjustments are not required. However, this can result in timing differences and affects areas such as utility bills, oil, printing costs, special collections etc.

New Benefice

This is continuing to work well, with agreement easily reached on joint costs such as Secretary, printing and office costs. For the Parish Share allocation, the benefice has started to use a new system to calculate each churches share, Initial drop for East Bergholt was from £53,000 to just over £38,600 for 2024. This has continued to drop and will be £36,500 for 2025. By 2026 we will have fully migrated onto the new system.

Magazine

The magazine account has turned a profit once again this year. This resulted in a total of £2,000 being transferred to the General Fund during this financial year. The PCC is extremely grateful for all the hard work undertaken by the Magazine Committee. There are currently outstanding costs of one month’s commission and after allowing for this cost the balance is just over £5,000. Very similar to 2023. The cost of advertising was increased after staying steady for 5 years, this has had a limited effect on the total number of adverts being placed. The committee is facing issues over finding new people willing to deliver the magazines and are looking to recruit, especially from the new houses, so the expanding village can be accommodated by deliveries of the parish magazine. No monies are transferred to the General Fund without consulting the Magazine Committee.

Roof Fund

This fund was started in July 2019 and the first expenses were paid out in December 2019. Charity Fundraising Ltd is the company who provided the invaluable expertise and support for us to be successful in our Lottery Bid. The Malschinger Endowment is held by the Diocese, and they allowed the PCC to draw £100,000 to the Roof Fund, and so far, £10,000 has been drawn down. This will have an impact on investment income for the General fund going forward. The decision was taken to restart the record for the Roof Fund from June 2024, for clarity. You will see both records on page 6 of the accounts but going forward only the new record will be reported.

Bell Cage

Bell cage donations appear up, partly due to some generous donations from visiting towers. Thank you to the ringers for agreeing to pay their own Bell Ringers Guild Subscriptions. The Bell cage monitor continues to be used regularly by visitors.

Parish Share

This is our largest single annual expense. This year, there continued to be little flexibility in our finance. Although after careful finance management, we were able to pay £31,300 of the requested £38,126 (2023 we paid £30,250 of £53,067). The Diocese has continued to be kept informed. The PCC also continue to look at reducing outgoings and making savings wherever possible. The new system as detailed above will help East Bergholt pay a larger percentage of its share going forward. The request for 2025 is £36,500.

Preservation Society

Once again, the Preservation Society has been on hand to help with minor works, and this support continues to be invaluable to keep out beautiful grade 1 listed church in good repair. This is a separate charity and is not connected to or run by the PCC.

Various

Investments are included at cost, but their market value remains in significant excess of cost. They provide a crucial regular income stream throughout the year.

Assets are stated as £141,527 (2023: £138,991) but would be higher if the market value of investments were shown. After taking into account all designated and restricted funds, and all known liabilities, the monies that are free for use stand at £5,700 (2023: £5,050).

We were able to draw down £500 from the East End Mission Hall charity to keep for the youth group. This is a separate charity for which East Bergholt PCC are the trustees. Investment income only, is available to spend on youth work within East Bergholt. This fund is held by the Diocese.

Close

Once again, this year as treasurer, has not been without its challenges. I would like to offer my sincere and grateful thanks to Fiona Trott, Sarah Southgate and now Jackie Reeves, who have been unfailing in their help and support. Also, to the PCC, who have taken difficult decisions and approved my recommendations during another problematic year for church finances.

Lesley Cherry
Hon Treasurer

East Bergholt PCC Accounts

East Bergholt PCC accounts	For the Year End	
	2024	2023
INCOME		
Restricted P S Donations	£0.00 *	£1,653.58
Planned giving/PGS	£24,006.61	£24,439.04
Gift Aid	£8,817.90	£9,896.83
Collections	£3,936.36	£4,320.05
Donations	£8,069.37	£5,181.38
Restricted Donations	£1,706.86	£3,064.99
Matt/Calendars	£1,252.27	£1,006.27
Take a break	£596.34	£80.40
Fundraising Roof	£144.13	£50.00
Ed/Train	£0.00	£0.00
Toddlers	£182.75	£167.10
Choir	£0.00	£0.00
Shared Benefice exp	£5,696.30	£5,282.39 **
Bookstall	£1,722.91	£1,558.25
Bell Cage	£196.94	£147.46
Diocesan Fees	£431.20	£869.00
PCC fees	£1,476.00	£2,170.00
Non-Stat Fees	£2,295.00	£2,166.60
Refreshments	£682.22	£196.60
Heating	£775.00	£665.00
Investment Income/Dividends	£2,329.40	£2,442.86
Roof Donations	£15,036.29	£2,196.33
Mission Hall	£500.00	£5,000.00 ***
Flower Fund	£0.00	£0.00
Special Collections	£247.90	£765.50
Transfer from Magazine A/C	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Misc	£222.00	£14.00
Misc Restricted	£1,180.15	£6,977.41
Easy Fundraising/ Amazon	£213.57	£229.80
Fundraising other bodies	£1,400.00	£1,802.74
jazz concert	£214.75	£1,217.13
G2GG	£4,450.77	£0.00
50/50	£0.00	£572.00
Total Income	£89,782.99	£86,132.71

*Monies generously donated from Preservation Society have all gone into the Roof account

**Also includes Honoraria

*** In 2023 this was spent on Coronation celebrations at East End. In 2024 the monies are being held for youth work.

East Bergholt PCC accounts	For the Year End	
	2024	2024
EXPENDITURE		
Parish Share	£31,300.00	£30,250.00
Deanery Levy	£0.00	£0.00
Clergy exp	£284.91	£999.89
Church run costs	£7,601.61	£8,665.48
Cost of services	£378.32	£281.98
Admin costs	£1,838.06	£1,494.45
Administrator Honoraria	£9,102.26	£7,460.91
Cleaning honoraria	£1,477.50	£1,295.00
Organ	£0.00	£186.00
Director of Music/non stat	£5,965.00	£4,784.00
Toddlers/Youth work	£30.00	£142.00
Fundraising and 50/50	£578.73	£828.40
Maintenance/Repairs	£570.83	£5,733.56
Bookstall	£192.61	£393.76
Tea/coffee kitchen	£204.21	£172.94
Mission Hall	£0.00	£5,026.04
Diocesan fees	£441.00	£734.00
Non stat fees	£1,075.00	£906.60
Donations	£0.00	£0.00
Special collections sent	£302.90	£630.50
Flower fund	£159.95	£281.85
Split costs Benefice	£763.15	£2,527.12
Misc	£1,941.74	£9,256.88
Bell cage	£228.00	£428.00
Insurance	£4,788.02	£4,148.08
Roof	£13,787.61	£7,642.95
Loan repayment	£1,800.00	£1,800.00
G2GG	£739.50	
Xmas Market	£960.00	
Total Expenditure	£86,510.91	£96,070.39

*Now we have a Priest in Charge, the sundry expenses have reduced, however with four churches and the increase in the hourly rate, Administrator costs have increased.

**This was larger in 2023 as the account received a lot of money towards Steph leaving present etc.

East Bergholt PCC Magazine Account

	For the year end 2024	2023
INCOME		
Adverts	£17,723.70	£16,439.00
error payment	£1,625.00	£0.00
TOTAL INCOME	£19,348.70	£16,439.00
EXPENDITURE		
Transfer to General Fund	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Compiler Honoraria	£1,862.70	£1,832.10
Admin	£28.25	£0.00
Advertising Commission	£1,784.95	£1,483.92
printing	£13,235.00	£14,154.00
Error payment refund	£1,625.00	£0.00
Total Expenditure	£20,535.90	£19,470.02

East Bergholt Parochial Church Council

Monitory Assets 31st December 2024

	2024	2023
General Fund Barclays	£13,800.00	£10,528.00
Suffolk Building Society	£14,416.00	£13,964.00
Magazine Account	£5,041.00	£6,229.00
Malschinger at cost	£92,742.00	£92,742.00
CBF/Black Rock at cost	£15,528.00	£15,528.00
TOTAL	£141,527.00	£138,991.00

Approved by the Parochial Church Council

Date 23/1/25

Signed on behalf
by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Trott', written over a horizontal line.

Fiona Trott
PCC Chairman

Investments	number of shares held	Cost per share	Total cost £	market value	
				2024 £	2023 £
Paskell Fund					
CBF Investment Fund (CCLA)	1010	6.54	6606	23354	22831
Charishares BlackRock Malschinger Investments (DBF)	3665	2.09	7660	27444	26698
Account 133001323S	2517	13.01	32742	48132	56894
Account 133001002J	3205	18.72	60000	201163	191392
			Total	300093	297815

Mission Hall Trust (DBF) *		1262	2166	2600
*Separate charity for youth work in East Bergholt only				

Statement of Designated and Restricted Funds

Name of Fund	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds		Endowment	Total	
		Designated	Undesignated		2024	2023
Flower	£1,003.00				£1,003.00	£1,163.00
Roof	£16,997.00				£16,997.00	£6,803.00
Paskell				£23,354.00	£23,354.00	£22,831.00
Malschinger *				£249,295.00	£249,295.00	£248,286.00
Altar		£0.00			£0.00	£10,000.00
Toddlers	£0.00				£0.00	£30.00
Black Rock			£27,444.00		£27,444.00	£26,698.00
Mission Hall	£500.00				£500.00	£0.00
				Total	£318,593.00	£315,811.00

* Monies held by Diocese and can only be used under strict Criteria, drawn £10,000 of the £100,000 allowance towards the roof

** This money has been redesignated to the roof account to be spent on a specific project.

ROOF Account year end 2024

Income from July 2019

Roof Tiles	£492.50
Fundraising	£10,117.61
Donations	£12,526.93
Cake Sales	£130.50
Parish giving	£70.54

Garden Tours	£499.00
Grants	£7,250.00
Preservations	
Society	£65,301.16
Matt Sales	£4,422.98
Funeral Collections	£341.81
DCMS Vat reclaims	£14,272.84
Gift aid	£2,481.79

Total Income **£117,907.66**

Expenditure from Dec 2019

Charity Fund Ltd	£19,444.80
Architect Fees	£21,865.18
Lead Repair	£1,368.00
Bat Surveys	£4,435.80
Quantity Surveyor	£600.00
Scaffold Sensors and Insurance	£2,423.31
Universal Stone	£62,684.17

Matt Costs	£2,082.45
Solicitor Fees	£264.00
Lottery Bid Architect	£1,388.89

Total Expenditure **£116,556.60**

Balance to take forward to new account **£1,351.06**

New LOTTERY ROOF Account

Total Income

B/F	£1,351.06
Malschinger	£10,000.00
Donations	£10,436.69
VAT reclaim	£958.00

*

Total **£22,745.75**

Total Expenditure

Press and Starkey	£600.00
Architect fees	£5,148.68

Total **£5,748.68**

Balance 31/12/24 £16,997.07

*Includes the £10,000 redesignated from the Altar.

Independent Examiner's report

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY'S, EAST BERGHOLT

I report on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 as set out on pages 1 to 6.

This report is made solely to members of the Parochial Church Council as a body, in accordance with the section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the Parochial Church Council those matters I am required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Church and the Church's members as a body, for my work, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Parochial Church Council and Independent Examiner

The Parochial Church Council are responsible for the preparation of financial statements. The Parochial Church Council consider that an audit is not required for the 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 financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.


Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

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 Church and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations from the Council concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out below:

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- a) which gives 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; or
 - to prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Acthave not been met; or
- b) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.


Britt Evans AAT
Rookery Cottage, Gaston Street,
East Bergholt, Colchester

.....13/01/2025.....
Date

Safeguarding

With the reorganisation of the Benefice in 2024 amongst the many changes was the idea that each church within the Benefice should have its own Parish Safeguarding Office, so the Brantham post was created and has been filled by Issy Smith, leaving me to focus on East Bergholt matters.

The main thrust in recent months has been to begin the process of updating the records for St Mary's both in terms of Safeguarding training and in seeking clarity of those with DBS checks. This rather laborious process has not yet been completed but should be done by the end of May. A Safeguarding training session is booked for September and will be held in the West End. Also, time will be set aside in an upcoming PCC meeting to spotlight recent developments and opportunities for further training.

In January the first quarterly meeting of the four Parish Safeguarding Officers took place in the rectory. All who were present found a degree of benefit from this new initiative of Rev Chris. It was certainly good to share views and experiences. The next session is scheduled for the end of April.

In conclusion I am pleased to report that no Safeguarding issues have been brought to my attention in the past twelve months. I should add that this might prove to be very different in the next five years as we will all need to be aware that with the many comings and goings in the church the profile of Safeguarding will become a much broader issue.

Howard Holdsworth
Parish Safeguarding Officer

Samford Deanery Synod & Group Council

Our synod reps are Sarah Southgate, Chris and Koshy Jacob. Rev Jenny Seggar is our Rural Dean. Jeanette Appleton is the Deanery's Lay representative on General Synod and provides in person or written reports of relevant General Synod gatherings as appropriate.

28 February, St Mary's, Capel St Mary

Guest speakers for this meeting were Edward Creasey, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance and Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary, who spoke about their roles within the Diocese.

Pastoral Reorganisation

At this meeting Rev Chris' appointment had been confirmed and Jenny Seggar gave a brief update on this and the current position on the North Samford vacancy, for which our on-going prayers were requested. The meeting endorsed Jenny's heartfelt thanks to our retired clergy for all their hard work during the vacancies.

Wedding Preparation Day

This annual Deanery event took place on Saturday 3 February at Capel St Mary. This was a morning event, followed by lunch and a chance to talk with clergy members. Once again, the feedback was very positive.

The Archdeacon's Visitation took place on 13 June at St Andrew's, Chelmondiston.

9 July, St Peter's, Copdock

Presentation and discussion on Wellbeing in Ministry - "The Church of England Covenant for the Care and Well-being of Clergy" - This item was led by Jenny and the following were among specific points noted during the group discussions:

- 1) Clergy burnout – lack of awareness?
- 2) Challenges experienced by single parish priests
- 3) Lone working – appropriate policies to be followed for pastoral visits etc
- 4) Difficulties in taking proper time-off
- 5) Abusive emails, rudeness
- 6) Applies to ordained and lay ministers

Jenny concluded by asking Synod representative to include this matter on their PCC agendas.

Pastoral Reorganisation

Revd Natalie West's appointment as Priest-in-Charge for North Samford and Mission Enabler will be confirmed at the end of September. The required Pastoral Measure will be enacted in due course.

9 October, St Mary's East Bergholt

At this meeting we heard updates from around the Deanery. It was interesting and informative to hear of the challenges and opportunities within each benefice. Rev Chris gave the update on behalf of Constable Country Benefice.

Parish levy

After a three-year break from contributing to the Deanery budget it was agreed that a £15 levy would be requested from each parish towards the ongoing costs of the Deanery.

Gill Forsyth and Julie Fermor - St Michael's Brantham Deanery reps

Churchwardens

2024 was a year of change. A change in churchwarden; a change in Rector and changes in service patterns. Lots of exciting new developments too to keep us on our toes and keep us from twiddling our thumbs!

It has been a great blessing throughout the year to continue working so harmoniously with the other three churches in the benefice. There was obviously a lot of praying, planning and overseeing for all the changes necessary to welcome Chris (and Rachel) as our new Rector in March. The first part of the year was organising the licensing service; then subsequently carefully and prayerfully making the changes that were needed in the ways the four parishes worshipped, made decisions and supported Chris in his new ministry among us. Change can sometimes be unsettling, so we have tried to support those who have found the transition more difficult and ensure that everyone realises the implications of having four churches not two – not just within St Mary's but also in the community at large. Chris was very supportive in initially observing what was "normal" at St Mary's before presenting ideas as to how we might consider "doing" things differently.

Change can present the opportunity to try different things. One of the main changes this year has been to introduce a new service (called Connect) on the first Sunday of the month, when all four church communities meet to worship together. A new service format was planned that was used across all four churches, aimed at mixing the traditional with new ways to worship. St Mary's has hosted two of these Connect services which have been very well received. A new regular service pattern was also developed for each Sunday in the month, offering a range of communion and family worship.

Some things of course do not change! We celebrated all the seasonal festivals throughout the year in the usual way. There were slight changes to the Christmas Eve schedule of services which in the main went well. Christmas is always a great time to welcome the village into St Mary's, be it to the range of our church services, the nursery nativities, the High School carol service, the WI and Mothers Union. We took the opportunity to post welcome cards with the Christmas service times to the newly occupied houses on the new developments. We hope to do more welcoming in the new year.

Another major change that will affect our church for at least three years was the Lottery project. After four years of preparing, delays thanks to COVID and changes to the Lottery funding criteria, we finally submitted our bid in May and heard in October that we had been unanimously successful. We are very excited and very daunted in equal measure as it will involve a lot of work to ensure that we get through the development phase successfully before applying to embark on the actual building work.

Not content with the extensive lottery workload, we also applied successfully to the national church for funds – one for environmental projects and the other for minor repairs to prevent further building decay. The Give to Go Green initiative in September ensured that after many years of wanting to but not having the necessary funds, money was raised to hang draft excluding curtains in the porch and West End to help prevent drafts. (They are already making a huge difference!) We organised seven concerts in six weeks to qualify for match funding – which we achieved! The minor repairs grant will allow us to make necessary repairs to the north chancel roof in the new year. We also had a heating survey done of the church which will hopefully shape decisions once the lottery project design gets started.

One spin off from the Give to Go Green events was the men's breakfast. This provided a great opportunity for fellowship and was so successful that it is now a regular church event every alternate month, with guest speakers organised well into 2025. Another successful series was the Advent lunches – soup and a roll with a seasonal reflection. An appreciated chance to spend getting to know each other better, which will be repeated during Lent.

We continued to work closely with the local schools – for example giving a talk to the Year 5s about the church architecture; the Parish Council, who maintain the churchyard; the Preservation Society to whom we are so grateful for their financial support in fabric repair costs; liaising with SVAM for hosting their concerts in church; local tour guides who have brought countless visitors during the year to see our beautiful church. We ensured that the church was represented at school and village events, such as the successful Summer Fair. Sadly, the weather put pay to the Christmas Parade and Market, so our infamous float will have to wait another year! Such a shame after all the hard work that had been done by the organisers.

So much time freely given by so many volunteers! We would like to finish our report by thanking and paying tribute to all the hours that have been spent over the last 12 months by an amazing team of people. They quietly get on with their duties and responsibilities in order that the church operates like clockwork – well for most of the time! St Mary's would not survive without them, and we would like to thank them all, but in particular our diligent team of Deputy Church Wardens who have supported us throughout. Here's to doing it all again next year – but with the added "fun" of the Lottery!

Fiona Trott and Jackie Reeves
Churchwardens

Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union is about supporting marriage and family life, through being part of a worldwide fellowship of over 4 million members. Our branch has members from both the parishes of St Mary's East Bergholt and St Michael Brantham.

Mothers' Union members live out the verses of Matthew 25 v 36-40 through several activities and by the gifts they have given, which has in the past year enabled us to reach over 1,000 people, here in our parishes as well as across the diocese. Whether it was by the various craft activities we undertook, including the very successful Christmas card workshop making cards for the prisoners of HMP Highpoint. Baby clothing and tiny pillowcases made and given to the Ipswich neonatal unit. So pleased are the hospital with the quality of our work and for the knowledge that our members have who have worked in similar neonatal units, that we are now consulted when they find themselves unable to source textile items for the neonatal unit. We also donate wash bags for the adult wards and make drain bag covers for the oncology unit.

We have raised funds to support various diocesan and overseas projects and used our funds to buy gifts of faith themed books for the children in our churches, baptism cards, wedding cards and a gift of our 'For Better For worse' book for those getting married in our benefice. Members of our branch are part of the Open the Book team that visits East Bergholt Primary School and they also help at the Manningtree Foodbank.

We have had ten monthly meetings each year where we have enjoyed fellowship and worship and learnt much from those who came to speak to us. We have welcome new members again this year and now have the opportunity to welcome Friends of Mothers' Union as a new way of joining Mothers' Union.

A number of our branch have attended various diocesan events and services and supported diocesan fund-raising events including the Ipswich Area coffee morning, held at St Michael's Martlesham.

Our treasurer Rob Shackleton has taken on an extra role as Diocesan bookkeeper for Mothers' Union and we are very grateful for the way he looks after our branch accounts. Jeanette is standing down from the branch committee as she has taken on the role of Diocesan President for the next three years.

In 2025 we look forward to welcoming members from Tattingstone and Bentley parishes to add to our growing branch which will then better reflect the new benefice of Constable Churches.

Jeanette Appleton, Janet Ball,
Jenny Chapman and Chris Jacob
East Bergholt and Brantham Mothers' Union

Bell Ringers

This report covers 12 months from January to December 2024. It contains the information as specified in the Ringers' handbook.



Named ringers

Ringer	Attendances	Ringer	Attendances
Terry Eagle (Captain)	78	Martin Digby	45
Julia Smith (Vice Captain)	78	George Harris	8*
Thomas Bryant	43	Rachel Lewis	79
Neil Culham	70	Steve Feeney	72

*Noted that this is below the minimum number of rings per year for insurance purposes. George has been reminded that he needs to attend at least 12 times per year.

Approved Learners

Ringer	Attendances
Keith Durrant	10

Ringling has been consistent through the year with Steve Feeney being signed off as a full ringer in August. Alison Ruffell (nee Reeves) did not return to continue ringling. A new ringer, Keith Durrant joined us in August, and we managed to get to the point of pushing a bell over with the clapper tied before practice finished. This has enabled Keith to continue to 'practice' ringling no 3 bell with the clapper tied in between the Sunday rings to keep his hand in over the winter.

There were no changes to the handbook in this year.

We have a regular band of eight ringers so have managed to complete the majority of rings this year with all five bells, which we are very pleased about. We also started teaching the newer ringers to do '1 round' and hope to progress to a '2 round' during 2025. We have space for another new learner or two.

During the current year, we have rung for one wedding; three demonstrations; two funerals; the licensing of the new vicar; the 80th anniversary of D-Day; a half-muffled ring for Remembrance and the usual rings at Christmas and New Year.

Issues dealt with in 2024

1. Pigeons nested twice inside the roof again. Nests were removed on both occasions. This requires ongoing monitoring.
2. Tiles on the roof were replaced as some broken ones have fallen off
3. Door lock sometimes stiff in wet weather – this is ongoing
4. New bulb replaced in the spotlight above no 3 bell

Issues outstanding

1. Gutters to be cleared especially at the back of the cage bordering the allotments

Terry Eagle
Captain of Bells

Flower Arrangers

2024 was a business-as-usual year which is not to belittle the considerable amount of time and commitment put in by the Flower Arranging Team. There were arrangements throughout the year, with the exception of Lent and we observed Easter, the Patronal Festival, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas by decorating the entire church.

The allotment continues to develop with another bed being brought into action in which we grew some annuals in addition to the dahlias which did very well. The plot that we have is almost completely cleared; it has been a challenging task since there is a lot of rubbish, including broken glass, under a mass of weeds.

We have also set up a dedicated flower Gmail account stmarysebflowers@gmail.com to facilitate floral communication meaning that Sophie and I can both access and attend to mail.

Sophie and Rachel met with Caryl Smith at the end of the year to discuss plans for the Tower 500 Festival planned for 2025. We replicated the wreath making session at the end of the year which was a productive social activity and a fitting end to 2024.

Rachael Lewis

On behalf of the Flower arrangers

Foundation Governors

“I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full,” John 10:10

East Bergholt CEVC Primary School continues to be a vibrant and nurturing community where children are encouraged to learn, grow and thrive in a safe, happy and inclusive environment. The school is deeply committed to its Christian ethos, ensuring every child feels valued and supported as part of a caring community.

The school enjoys a strong and meaningful relationship with St. Mary the Virgin Church, with several memorable events enhancing the spiritual life of the school community. The Harvest Festival, celebrated at the church and led by Reverend Chris, was a joyful occasion of song and thanksgiving. The Christingle service, held at school with contributions from Reverend Chris, Ruth Bull and Nick Pavitt, was a magical moment, with the children’s Christingles lighting up the hall. Remembrance Day was marked with a thoughtful service led by Nick Pavitt, helping children reflect on the importance of remembrance and peace.

In December, the whole school came together for a beautiful Carol Concert at St. Mary’s, led by Reverend Chris, the School Ambassadors and Faith Councillors. The church was filled with music and celebration, creating a true sense of community. Nativity performances at school were equally special, with children bringing the Christmas story to life for their families.

This year’s inclusion assemblies have played a key role in reinforcing the school’s Christian values, particularly in promoting the importance of understanding and celebrating differences. One notable assembly featured a Paralympic Power Lifting silver medallist, who shared her powerful story of resilience and achievement, inspiring and motivating pupils. Through these assemblies, the school encourages pupils to embrace diversity, fostering a sense of belonging and community. The school’s

commitment to these values is further reflected in staff training on the 'No Outsiders' programme, which nurtures tolerance and equips children with the skills to live as active, compassionate citizens in modern Britain.

This year has been filled with enriching opportunities that reflect the school's Christian vision, "I have come that they might have life and live it to the full" (John 10:10). Rock Steady band lessons have inspired pupils to perform for peers and parents, while October's Curriculum WOW Day saw classrooms transform into different countries, allowing pupils to explore global cultures. A visit from Little City gave younger pupils the chance to role-play in a child-sized city, fostering creativity and teamwork. Year 5 pupils also delighted families with a ukulele performance, showcasing the joy of music and learning. These opportunities help pupils live life to the full, nurturing their talents and imagination.

Family assemblies allowed parents to witness their children's achievements firsthand, while the Beauty and the Beast pantomime, funded by the PFA, brought joy and laughter to all. Events like Anti-Bullying Week, Diabetes Day, and Children in Need taught pupils the importance of compassion and community responsibility, nurturing their sense of empathy. Sport, a cornerstone of school life, has provided pupils with opportunities for participation and enjoyment in activities such as football, cross country, bowling, dodgeball, and the festive Christmas Cracker event. The inclusive approach to these activities ensures every child is encouraged to take part, celebrate their achievements, and build teamwork and confidence, helping them to live life to the full.

The PFA has played a vital role in enriching school life, organising events like cake sales, a Winter Disco, and a Christmas Market, all of which reflect our Christian values of community and generosity. Children enjoyed visiting Santa Claus in his teepee, and the funds raised continue to enhance educational opportunities, helping pupils live life to the full.

A recent online safety event supported families in navigating the challenges of children being online, fostering a spirit of care and responsibility. Parents' Evenings ensured that families remain informed about their children's learning, and Afternoon Tea in November deepened the school's bond with parents.

Governors, inspired by the school's Christian ethos, remain actively engaged in the life of the school, attending training sessions and participating in a Governor Open Day, where they observed classroom activities and shared lunch with pupils. Their involvement strengthens the link between the school and the church community.

The recent Ofsted inspection affirmed the school's 'Good' rating, a testament to the hard work of staff and leadership, all grounded in Christian principles. The school's commitment to its Christian values is also evident through collaboration with local schools in the SLIN network and a wellbeing committee supporting staff. As we look ahead to the possible SIAMS inspection in 2025/26, the school continues to thrive as a beacon of learning, community, and joy, with Christ at the centre of all it does.

For more updates and news, please visit the school website: <https://www.eastbergholt-pri.suffolk.sch.uk/>.

Report compiled by Clare Sampson (Headteacher)

East Bergholt Parish Magazine

The monthly parish magazine continues to provide all residents of East Bergholt with useful information and entertaining reads. It includes not only church-related content (such as news from St. Mary's and local churches of other denominations, as well as a calendar of the month's Church of England services) but also updates from numerous local organisations (sporting, cultural, community, and government); articles of general interest from members of the community; and local information listings. Advertising, meanwhile, not only pays to produce the magazine and makes a net contribution to church funds but is also valuable to readers in itself. In the last year we have slightly increased the advertising rates, for the first time in five years, with very little loss of advertisers as a result. We have also started distributing the magazine to the residents of the new homes recently built in the village, and for many it will be one of their first sources of insight into East Bergholt life. The magazine is also an important vehicle for communicating the progress of current initiatives at St. Mary's, such as Tower 500 and the Lottery funding.

Barnaby Page – Editor

Open the Book

The Open the Book team has gone from strength to strength this year. We managed to recruit Rev Chris – who was unaware of what he was letting himself in for! We have also been joined recently by Angela Edwards who volunteered herself - which is great. The team now comprises 9 regulars with the current churchwardens standing in the wings if needed, making a total of 11. This means that we can cope when one or two are not able to attend.

We have been going into school roughly once a month and impressing the children and staff with our acting skills! Well, maybe not, but they all seem to enjoy our stories and our first century costumes. Talking of which, if anyone is handy with a sewing machine and would like to knock up some children or adult tabards from old sheets (or other) – then we would be delighted to hear from you! The costumes really help to bring a story to life and the children love dressing up and taking part.

If you would like to join in with this important ministry, please just let one of the team know and we can explain how it all works – it would be good to welcome a couple more men to balance up our numbers. Also, you can join in with this important ministry by praying for all the children and staff in the school.



There is now a generation of children growing up who will not hear the bible being read and will not hear any bible stories unless it is through the school.

Please note the wonderful beards!



Thank you to Jeanette Appleton for knitting these.

Ruth Bull (Team leader), Dianne Willett, Wendy Withers, Richard Appleton, Chris Jacob, Susan Shepherd, Roy Seden, Rev Chris and Angela Edwards

Toddlers Group

Our group has continued to flourish this year, and we welcomed many new families to both our group and the village. We meet fortnightly on a Friday morning, and we finished each term with a special event, an Easter Egg hunt in Spring, our Teddy Bear's picnic in the summer and our Christmas party in December. We are very grateful to the Mother's Union who have continued to financially support these events.

The Easter Egg hunt was enjoyed by a number of little ones. Chocolate eggs and fluffy toy chicks had been hidden in the church, and it was an opportunity for many of them to explore our beautiful church. We hope they found them all, but I am sure if not, members of the congregation would have been pleased to find something chocolatey during the Sunday service!

Sadly, our Teddy Bear's picnic had to be moved indoors due to a very cold July day. However, we did manage to join hands for our Toddler Group Prayer outside and at the same time welcome Rev Chris to our group. The children had fun finding football related clothes hidden in the church for Large Marge (Liz's enormous teddy), who was packing her case for the Euros. She soon had a full case and an England shirt to wear and a football to kick around. After all the games, the children enjoyed their picnic. We all had a wonderful time, even though we were unable to sit outside.

Our Christmas party was very well attended, and each child was given a small gift from Mother Christmas on their way home. It was lovely to see so many excited faces enjoying themselves.

2025 brings a few changes to the group. The Parish Council have been keen for us to run our group on a weekly basis. We are the only baby and toddler group in East Bergholt, and with the new houses being completed, it was felt important to offer something more for the under 5's. The Parish Council have also gladly helped us with the extra cost of heating. We have agreed to trial this until Easter, and we are hoping this weekly group will be a success. Rev Chris will also be regularly joining us just after our snack time to play his guitar and sing some songs with the children, which will be great fun. We are all very excited about these new changes to the group.

Liz Digby, Gill Rattray, Gina Bruce
St Mary's Toddler Group

Family@church



The continuing growth and development of this important mission is a great blessing. However it still needs to be prayed about, to ensure that we are offering appropriate ways for families to worship – both in terms of format and time – and to welcome those moving into the village on the new housing developments.

Our numbers have remained fairly constant, and it is encouraging to sometimes have a similar number at our afternoon services as in the mornings. We have welcomed new families, some from outside the village, and are grateful for the core families who come regularly – despite the increasing calls on family time at the weekend. There have been no special occasions to celebrate this year, so we have been in church each month, with the usual blend of singing, activities, stories and prayers, which includes our family@church sorry song. Each service we finish with a scrummy tea.

None of these services would be possible without a lot of support from a wonderful team of helpers. We are very grateful to everyone who has lent a hand this year: Karen, Gill and Gina who have given invaluable help setting up for services, welcoming our families and helping with activities and storytelling. We have continued to give the children booklets at Easter and Christmas, together with the eggs and advent calendars and we are grateful to Rev Chris for playing his guitar and teaching us new songs!

Thank you!



Liz Digby and Fiona Trott

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

St Mary the Virgin, East Bergholt

Sunday, 24th April 2024 immediately after the 10.30am Service

<p>In Attendance:</p> <p>Rev Chris Willis, Fiona Trott (FT) (Chair), Gill Rattray (Minutes Secretary) Jeanette and Richard Appleton, Jean Camp, Lesley Cherry (LC), John Gamlin, Howard (HH) and Marji Holdsworth, Koshy and Chris Jacob, Pat Kemsley, Haven Moss, Geoff Potter, Archie Rattray, Jackie Reeves, Victoria Rothwell, Glen Rowson, Reuben Rushen, Hazel Sinclair, Sarah Southgate, Julie Taylor, Wendy Withers</p> <p>Apologies from Steve Newman, Derek and Joyce Fox, Bridget Hutton, Dorothy Brundell and Martin Huggett</p>	
1	<p>Welcome and Prayers</p> <p>Rev Chris welcomed everyone and opened with a prayer. He then handed over the meeting to FT</p>
2	<p>Minutes of the APCM of 26th March 2023</p> <p>These were approved by those present.</p>
3	<p>Electoral Roll Report</p> <p>Six members have been removed from the roll this year – two had died, two had moved and two others were no longer worshipping at St Mary's, due to ill health.</p> <p>There have been four new members, giving a current total of 120, which was approved by all present.</p>
4	<p>Report on the proceedings of the PCC</p> <p>FT reported that this has been a particularly busy year for the PCC with an interregnum, changes to the Benefice, appointment of Rev Chris and applying to the Lottery for the roof funding among other challenges.</p> <p>The report was approved by all present.</p>
5	<p>Approve the Treasurer's report and Accounts.</p> <p>FT asked those present if they were happy with the report and whether anyone had any questions for LC.</p> <p>With no questions asked, John Gamlin proposed the adoption of the accounts, which was seconded by Geoff Potter and approved by all present.</p> <p>FT thanked LC for the completion of these in another difficult financial year.</p>
6	<p>Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod</p> <p>This was approved by all present.</p>
7	<p>Safeguarding Report</p> <p>HH reported that 22 people had participated in safeguarding training in September 2023 and received their certificates for this. He also reported that no safeguarding issues had been reported.</p> <p>Rev Chris emphasised the vital importance of this training, as he had experience of the devastating effects of abuse on victims.</p>
8	<p>Election of Churchwardens</p> <p>Fiona Trott (proposed by Derek Fox and Jeanette Appleton) and Jackie Reeves (proposed by Fiona Trott and Erica Donnellan) were elected unanimously as Churchwardens for 2024.</p>
9	<p>Deanery Synod Representatives</p> <p>Koshy Jacob, Chris Jacob and Sarah Southgate were all proposed by Victoria Rothwell and seconded by Lesley Cherry and unanimously elected for the next three years.</p>

10	<p>PCC</p> <p>There were four vacancies for three years, two for two years (now that Jackie Reeves was ex officio) and one for one year.</p> <p>Howard Holdsworth (proposed by Lesley Cherry and Fiona Trott) standing for re-election and Marian Godwin (proposed by Jackie Reeves and Sarah Southgate) were both elected unanimously for three years but still leaving two vacancies for this year. FT stressed the importance of trying to fill these vacancies.</p>
11	<p>Appoint an Independent Examiner</p> <p>Britt Evans has agreed to continue, and her reappointment was approved by all those present.</p>
12	<p>Receive all other reports</p> <p>FT thanked all the group leaders and those involved in the work of the church.</p> <p>All reports were approved and accepted by those present.</p> <p>Rev Chris also thanked all those involved in the Ministry of St Mary's.</p> <p>FT then gave an update on the Lottery funding for the roof repairs.</p> <p>Last November the principles for Lottery funding changed, proving helpful as it now encompasses 'Saving Heritage' as well as community benefits. The bid for the Development Phase has to be submitted by the end of May.</p> <p>There being no further questions, Rev Chris closed the meeting at 11.50 with a brief prayer for the future of our Ministry working together with the other three churches in the Benefice.</p>