



St Mary the Virgin | Finedon

THE PARISH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN FINEDON

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

Reverend Morna Simpson
The Vicarage
Church Hill
Finedon
Northants NN9 5NR

ELECTORAL ROLL

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules a new Electoral Roll is prepared every 6 years. 2025 is a year in which this takes place and the new Roll has been completed. The Electoral Roll Officer reports for 2025/26 a total of 88 on the roll, 70 residents and 18 non residents. The total for 2024/25 was 136, 104 residents and 32 non residents. A copy of the roll is available for inspection.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PCC

The PCC and Committees

The last Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held on 28th April 2024 when the following were appointed in accordance with the Church Representation Rules:

Chair	Minister of the Parish	
Church Wardens	Colin Needle	Vice Chair
	Julie Kightley	
Members of the Laity	Bryan Chapman	
	Christine Chapman	
	Neil Forster	
	Sheira Gee	
	Peter Grindrod	
	Carole Mitchell	
	Christian Needle	
	Malcolm Needle	
	Philip Powis	
	Andrew Weatherill	
	Joanne Weatherill	
	One vacancy	
Deanery Synod representative elected 2023	Colin Needle	

The church was in interregnum between 10th January and 3rd September 2024 during which time the PCC are indebted to Father Stan Haworth for his dedication in conducting the majority of services throughout this period. The PCC and all members of our church were delighted that Reverend Morna Simpson was inducted as Vicar of Finedon on 4th September 2024 and that St Mary's can now look forward with promise and hope to a new chapter in the life of our church.

The Role of the PCC

Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) are charities, which are governed by two pieces of Church of England legislation, called Measures. These are:

The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended. This defines the principal function, or purpose, of the PCC as **“promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church”** and

The Church Representation Rules

General functions of the council

1. It shall be the duty of the minister and the parochial church council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish.
2. The functions of parochial church councils shall include -

- (a) co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
- (b) the consideration and discussions of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the Church on any question;
- (c) making known and putting into effect any provision made by the diocesan synod or the deanery synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the council on any particular matter;
- (d) giving advice to the diocesan synod and the deanery synod on any matter referred to the council;
- (e) raising such matters as the council consider appropriate with the diocesan synod or deanery synod;
- (f) appointing sidespersons (who are also known as assistants to the churchwardens).

In addition to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 28th April 2024, 7 further PCC meetings were held in 2024.

The following appointments were made:

Treasurer and Planned Giving Officer Paul Harris; Secretary Jean Marlow (both non PCC members)
Vice Chair Colin Needle; Electoral Roll Officer Joanne Weatherill; Safeguarding Officer Joanne Weatherill
Standing Committee: Vicar, churchwardens, treasurer, Bryan Chapman, Philip Powis, Peter Grindrod and Malcolm Needle.

Matters routinely discussed at PCC meetings were; safeguarding; finance; fabric and contents of the church; Deanery Synod; archivist reports; the Mission Room; Mulso School; parish magazine; website/social media; Saturday morning activities; social events and fundraising; Faculty for re-ordering of the church.

Additional matters discussed were: appointment of sidespersons; appointment process and Section 11 meeting to formally advertise for a new vicar; arrangements for running of the church during interregnum; induction of Reverend Morna Simpson; repairs to the church clock, heating system, sacristy roof and other minor works; purchase of a defibrillator; Trustees of The Church of England Temperance Hall; revision of wedding fees; the management of safety in the churchyard; fundraising for the re-ordering of the church.

Church Services

Holy Eucharist services have been held on Sundays 9.30 am (sung) and on Tuesday/Wednesday mornings at 11.00 am. During the interregnum Father Stan Haworth led the worship at the majority of these services. Choral evensong has been held at 6.00 pm on the first Sunday in the month. Other services normally held include services throughout Holy Week, All Souls Day, Remembrance Day at the war memorial, Advent and Christmas Carol services, Christingle and Midnight Mass.

In 2024 there were:

Marriages – 4

Baptisms - 3

Funerals – 14

Interment of Ashes – 7

Safeguarding Report St Mary the Virgin Finedon 2024/25

St Mary the Virgin Finedon follows the House of Bishops' 2017 report "Promoting a Safer Church" safeguarding policy as recommended by the Diocese of Peterborough. It has six overarching policy commitments.

1. Promoting a safer environment and culture.
2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
6. Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

As Safeguarding Officer for St Mary the Virgin, it is my role to help promote a safer environment and culture within church.

Safeguarding is on the agenda for every PCC meeting.

Safeguarding remains at the heart of church and PCC activities. The PCC are aware of their responsibility to remain up to date with safeguarding training which was updated in October 2022 and is due to be renewed in October 2025.

The Diocese is in the process of reviewing and updating training modules, including Domestic Abuse Training. Once updated we will arrange for the PCC to undertake this training as required

DBS checks are completed via "thirtyone:eight" to ensure those working within the church with children and vulnerable adults are cleared to do so. As Safeguarding Officer my DBS check was renewed in April 2023 and is automatically set to be renewed on a rolling 3 year basis.

We are signed up to the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard, which maintains a record of safeguarding goals and training.

We continue to remain open and vigilant to signs of abuse within our church community.

Joanne Weatherill
Safeguarding Officer
St Mary the Virgin Finedon
18 February 2025

Report under Section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018
FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

Incorporating any changes since last year, including repairs, renewals, maintenance etc. scheduled or otherwise.

- Gravestone safety inspection, a survey was carried out on Wednesday 13th March 2024 and the risk of injury or death to visitors in St. Mary's churchyard is low. The burial ground on the opposite side of Church Hill (once referred to as the 'New Churchyard') is not the responsibility of the PCC. This passed to Finedon Urban District Council in 1920 when it was closed to further burials and is the responsibility of the Local Authority.
- A leak was identified in the roof of the Sacristy, on further inspection it was identified that damage to the external roof and lead gully was the problem. This has now been repaired; the internal damage is yet to be repaired.
- A new security light has been installed over the outside of the west door
- The notice board inside the church has been replaced, this was made and kindly donated by Jonathon Knight
- A new CD player and microphone system has been installed to replace the older faulty unit
- A plaque to recognise the ministry of Father Stan during our interregnum and his 50 years of ministry was unveiled on the wooden lectern.
- A defibrillator was installed in the Lych Gate, which was funded by donations and fundraising organised by Linda Turnell, this also holds a bleed kit.
- The faculty was granted to proceed with the reordering project, this had been 14 years in the making, a focused effort on fundraising and grant application will be needed to see this project through to completion
- During the servicing of the boilers in October which gave the boilers a good bill of health, a leak was identified. After intensive investigation a major issue was identified with the main 6inch cast iron pipe work, resulting in the total failure of the pipe work. A long term solution is being investigated resulting in the church being without any heating over the winter period
- July saw the visitation inspection by the Archdeacon to inspect the contents of the Terrier which lists the goods and ornaments of the church and the logbook and progress on any maintenance requirements against the quinquennial report. All went well with some minor updates on notices. Colin is going through a process of compiling a photographic record of all goods and ornaments to provide a better and visual record of the contents of the church.
- The development of an operations manual is being put together to have a full record and information on various aspects of running the church community and its buildings
- An Audit was carried out by the Ecclesiastical Insurance company to check we are compliant, some minor recommendations have been identified and currently being implemented, such as a Key log to identify who holds keys, identification of the water stopcock in case the water needs to be isolated in an emergency and updates on health and safety measures and risk assessments.
- Colour changing alter lights installed
- A Glass Sanctuary lamp for the blessed sanctuary chapel donated
- Church Clock, after its annual service failed, it was repaired but failed again in May with major mechanical issues, gaining quotes for repair has been difficult but could need up to £8,000 of work; investigation of grants and other quotes are ongoing.

Churchwardens Colin Needle and Julie Kightley

HIGHAM DEANERY SYNOD

The first meeting in 2024 was at Finedon on 5th March, attended by Colin Needle and Sheira Gee with cake and drinks served on entry which was well received. Due to not having a rural Dean, Andrew Presland a lay representative chaired the meeting. Chad Chadwick was the visiting speaker, who talked about Gen2Team and their work in supporting youth ministry in the diocese. Wild Church / happy church / Messy church or Forest church to engage with families and a younger audience to introduce them to a faith journey and what help is available from Peterborough with the message from Bishop Debbie about listening to children in church and getting them engaged with services. Discussion about Eco Church and the support that is available, with many churches engaging in this process and the awards Bronze Silver and Gold that are available. Consider and encourage our own church to review how Eco friendly we are and what we can do to improve our environment

18th June 2024 St Mary's Higham Ferrers

Attended, Colin Needle and Sheira Gee. Chaired by Rev Nicki Hobbs Acting Rural Dean

- Opened with Payer and Worship by Mother Louise Bishop (St Marys Higham) based on Celtic Prayer Service
- Presentation by David Crisp on Autism and Disability inclusion in Churches
 - History of Autism back through the ages
 - What happens in our Church?
 - Some people have a negative attitude towards disabilities, especially the invisible ones.
 - What do we do to openly welcome and adapt to meet people's needs?
 - Social awareness, recognition
 - Making people welcome or unwelcome when attending church, (the disruptive child) (the socially awkward person)
 - How do we welcome autistic people into church, how do we outwardly support them
 - Dealing with social interaction
 - What can we do to help or make you feel comfortable conversation
 - Take time to listen and learn
- Vocations Team and Events Update: Rev Rachel Hawkins reported that
 - 6 new deacons and 12 new priests will soon be ordained, along with around 12 lay readers.
 - Lay Ministries Officer Andrew Coleby is due to retire. There has been a good response nationally to replacement for this role.
- Higham Deanery updates
- Deanery Finance update
- Peterborough Diocesan Synod update
 - Presided over by Bishop Debbie
 - Focus from the Board of Education, position of church schools
 - To support school Leaders
 - Create more church school places and new church schools
 - Rev Morna Simpson gave an update from General Synod, to review the standing orders of synod operations
- Discussion about Deanery Synod its future direction and Bishop Debbie's vision
- AOB
 - CN requested consideration of setting up a deanery Facebook page to help advertise and communicate events and activities with the deanery, Nicki to investigate.

24th October 2024 St Peter's Irthlingborough

Attendees Rev Nikki Hobbs Acting Rural Dean 25 Deanery members (Colin Needle and Sheira Gee)

N Hobbs (NH) welcomed everyone, thanking Father John and the St Peter's team for their hospitality. She spoke about Bishop Debbie's visit earlier in the day. Bishop Debbie reflected on the diversity she had seen within the towns and villages, and the ways in which people across the deanery are seeking to serve. These included running a toddler group, operating a food bank, work within schools, and the work of Phoenix saving things from landfill and providing children in other countries with clothing. She commented on just how servant-hearted this deanery is.

Election of Deanery Lay Chair

Dudley Hughes (DH) has offered to take on this role. Steve Holman (SH) proposed DH, seconded by Lyn Boxall (LB). DH said that he worships at Chelveston St John's and gave an outline of his background, including experience of chairing. Lay members voted unanimously for DH to take on the role.

Higham Deanery update

NH reported on the visit from Bishop Debbie and said that she had expressed gratitude for the welcome she received. Updates were received from across the deanery, including:

- Nene Crossing benefice – all is well.
- Finedon – Reverend Morna Simpson has now been in post for nearly two months and this is going well.
- Four Spires benefice – Reverend Neil Bullen will be moving from Lincoln diocese and will be licensed on 30th January. We pray for him as he prepares for the transfer.
- Higham and Chelveston – no issues reported.
- St Mary's – no issues reported.
- Whitefriars – still in vacancy, which has been the case for more than a year. The plan is to re-advertise after Christmas.
- St Peter's – Rachel Hawkins has moved to Dorset, so this parish is now in vacancy.

Finance Update

The diocese provides updates to Katrina Hutchins from Wellingborough Deanery in the absence of a treasurer. We are three quarters of the way through the year and have paid 47% parish share, compared to 50% this time last year. Thanks have been passed on to the deanery.

Diocesan Synod report

AP spoke about a new synod which met in Northampton recently. Bishop Debbie gave a presidential address and encouraged us to travel together as children of God. She also noted the need for a governance review to see whether the current structure is best, and two consultants are about to start work on this. They will be interviewing people across the diocese. Various elections will be taking place across the diocese and a cultural shift in governance is already happening.

2023 annual accounts and reports were shared. 80% of the parish share was paid in 2023, which was the 5th worst in England. This was unusual as we usually perform closer to the middle. AP queried whether this might have been affected by our response to the post-covid period. Budgets were also presented, with a significant use of reserves noted. Some money is expected to come from the parish share, which is going to increase by 3%. This is lower than it was ten years ago due to factors such as shrinking attendance. The budget was approved, though it was acknowledged that change is needed as the current situation is not sustainable. It was also highlighted that we need to get more people into church, rather than just more money.

There was an update on recent changes to the online faculty system. The aim of this is to develop a parish-focused approach. There was also an update on how we will be supported to reach net zero, with poorly performing churches being targeted. Positively, the first church in the diocese has recently received a gold award. There was some discussion about the balance between reaching net zero and outreach.

Also discussed were issues such as human dignity of disabled children, social services and needs in urban churches, safeguarding, and living in love and faith.

The diocesan synod will next be held on 22nd March 2025. AP noted that there are two lay places vacant from our deanery and encouraged anyone interested to ask him about joining. There is also space for applicants in forthcoming elections, and anyone interested is encouraged to reach out. Highlighted that it is important to use our voices for change, and also feedback the other way to the deanery. NH noted that Bishop Debbie is keen to achieve this too.

Deanery Facebook group

At the last meeting it was proposed that we look into having a deanery Facebook group to share information about what is going on in our churches. This would not be for deanery synod business or debating theology, but for community events and ideas, or sharing celebratory news. People would need to request to join, posts would need to be approved and content would be moderated. Community rules would be in place. This has been discussed with Jo Tinker from the diocese, who had no objections to the idea. Mother Louise noted that she has previously worked in deaneries where this was used, and it was a good way of sharing information. The decision to proceed with this was unanimously approved.

Discussion about Deanery Synod

DH started by highlighting that the synod can be a vehicle for doing activities that parishes cannot do due to limitations. It is also helpful for sharing ideas and asking for feedback. NH invited discussion in small groups about what burning issues people would like to address, and what would make them excited to come to synod. Members were then asked to share their thoughts. One group suggested inviting a guest speaker to energise and engage us on issues such as the environment or a local issue. This would help the church become more visible within other groups and help to increase our outreach. Another group suggested less time on governance and more time in small groups. Other suggestions included a benefice being spotlighted each time and sharing networks of people with expertise in different areas. The synod could be used as a base to springboard out into our benefices and parishes, with members inspiring each other, building relationships and sharing God's work.

Dates for next meetings: Wednesday 19th March and Tuesday 17th June 2025

Colin Needle

Deanery Representative

REPORTS FROM CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

ARCHIVIST'S REPORT

Dr Stephen Swales has finished transcribing the oldest parish registers in the archives. Namely:

Baptisms	1538 to 1855	(7 registers)
Banns	1753 to 1812	(1 register)
Marriages	1539 to 1837	(6 registers)
Burials	1538 to 1863	(5 registers)

These are now freely available, on request, from the archivist on Excel spreadsheets (or a printout for a small charge). They are also available publicly on <https://www.freereg.org.uk> a search engine containing transcribed parish registers that is maintained by volunteers as a free public service.

This means that the oldest registers need no longer be disturbed as they are in a fragile condition. Registers after the dates given above, are still available in their original form for searches by contacting the archivist. We do not charge for this service but ask for a small donation to maintain the archives and Dolben library.

At sometime in the near future the dehumidifier in the Monks Cell will need to be replaced. I believe that it is something like ten years old and has given good service over the years. The cost for a new dehumidifier which is in permanent use would be in the region of £300 - £500. The present dehumidifier is an obsolete model with a tank that has to be manually emptied into a bucket which is then carried downstairs to be emptied outside. During the autumn to spring months, it may need emptying every other day depending upon humidity (i.e. rainfall and damp weather conditions). It also has to be manually restarted after a power cut. Modern dehumidifiers are self-draining and automatically restart after electricity interruption.

As usual the Monks Cell was open to the public for the Summer Fete and Flower Festival, although it had fewer visitors than previous years. However, one visitor returned on a later date with his family to see something that is rare these days: parish records still in their original location and a parish library that has not been broken up and sold to collectors.

Barry Wadeson
 Archivist
 January 2025
 07773 140208
 b.m.wadeson@outlook.com

2024 ANNUAL REPORT: CHURCH FLOODLIGHTING

2024 took our floodlighting project through its 15th year since it began in February 2010. As always, we express our gratitude to everybody who submitted dedications to sponsor the illumination of our beautiful Church building, as they shared their celebrations of special occasions or remembered loved ones who are no longer with them. In September the floodlights were illuminated for two specific celebrations: to welcome Reverend Morna as our new Parish Priest early in the month and to mark the 50th anniversary of Father Stan's Ordination at the end of the month.

As in previous years what remains of both The Buffs 2019 donation and The Trefoil Guild 2023 donation were used to fill in the "gap weeks" when we receive no specific dedications. As ever, we thank those donors who kindly gave more than the suggested £12 weekly contribution.

The total amount donated in 2024 showed a slight decrease (of £217) compared with 2023, with a total banking of £1,191 of which £389 was “gift-aided”. The practice of gift-aiding the donations enables us to reclaim the tax element back from HM Revenue & Customs to boost these figures further.

There were no 2024 dedications brought forward from the 2023 banking but the payments for two late 2023 dedication dates were banked early in 2024. At the other end of the year, the 2024 banking included one dedication made early for a 2025 date and late receipts for two 2024 dedications were not banked until early 2025.

This project began over a decade ago – we continue to hope to receive at least 2 dedications each week to go towards the costs of floodlighting. There were 52 weeks (Sunday to Saturday) in 2024 for which dedications could be made and the statistics were: 12 weeks with no specific dedications / 17 weeks with 1 dedication / 13 weeks with 2 dedications / 4 weeks with 3 dedications and 6 weeks with 4 dedications. We technically “fell-short” of our two-per-week target on 29 occasions. We plugged the 12 gap weeks which had no specific dedications by using some of the donation “kitty” provided by the Buffs (late 2019) and the Trefoil Guild (early 2023), specifically to help cover such occasions.

As a 52 Sunday year, 2024 saw us virtually cover the PCC’s target for general receipts which was £1,248 (2 dedications for each week), falling short of this by just £57.

The floodlight project continues into 2025 and, as always, we hope and pray that the scheme remains a success and that the year itself will be a better one for everybody.

Report Prepared By :
Carole A Mitchell (on behalf of the PCC)

February 2024

FUND RAISING AND SOCIAL EVENTS

It has been yet another successful year for The Events Group who meet throughout the year to organise a range of social and fundraising events.

Coffee Mornings in the Mission Room were a new venture which aimed to provide a place for the whole community to meet. These have proved to be popular, being well supported and successfully raising over £1700 from January to December.

The sponsored Bible Read raised £1230.

Our Summer Fete was opened by our May Queen on a lovely but blustery afternoon. Many visitors came, played games, bought plants and sampled some homemade cakes with their tea and coffee.

Despite the heating issues, the Christmas Tree Festival went ahead as planned. The theme “Christmas on Stage” attracted many imaginative displays and the shoeboxes from the local schools enhanced the exhibits. There were many visitors over the weekend. The Rushden Town Band Concert at the Star Hall on the Saturday evening during the Festival weekend was enjoyed by all those who attended. The whole weekend raised a wonderful £1700.

The Flower Festival held in September with the theme of “A World of Art” was once again well supported by individuals and organisations creating spectacular displays, for which we are extremely grateful. Friday afternoon and Saturday proved more popular for visitors as Sunday’s weather was not so good, but overall it was another very successful event with £2748.26 being donated from the Flower Festival fund to the church General Account.

Other events included, Crowning of the May Queen, The Grand Christmas Raffle and the Wine Walkabout. The Group would like to thank everyone who has helped or supported the range of events in anyway. If you have any great ideas or would like to help in anyway, please contact the churchwardens.

Julia Havlickova
Events Team

PARISH MAGAZINE REPORT 2024

Overall, our circulation has kept steady and we have seen an increase in casual sales from both the church and the library. We are always looking for new people who wish to receive the magazine monthly. So, if anyone has had new neighbours then pop a magazine through their door free of charge, there are always spare copies in church.

The magazine is also supported by various local businesses with their adverts, and we are indebted to them for their support. We have seen a number leave this last year but have seen new advertisers come forward.

The end of 2024 also saw the new colour sleeve introduced and then a new order in how the magazine is laid out all to keep things fresh. We have also seen a local artist produce some of the front cover images all based around Finedon scenes, of which I am very grateful.

The production process of the magazine is a well-oiled machine, from sending out the 'Call to Action' for all contributors to send in any updates, to the proof reading prior to submitting to the printers.

We have had some very interesting articles during the year provided by local people, some about local event others further afield. This mix keeps a good variety of articles to our readers and thanks go to everyone who has contributed to the magazine content. It is truly a community resource.

Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to Adrian, Bryan and the team who make sure that the magazine is with the distributors before the end of the month and to all the distributors who deliver across Finedon and further afield.

Finedon Parish Church Magazine Account Balance sheet 2024 (November 2023-October 2024)

RECEIPTS		EXPENDITURE	
Church/Library Sales	£63.00	Printing	£2626.00
Subscriptions	£2552.00	Transfer to Parish Account	£3000.00
Advertising	£1948.00		
Total Receipts	£4563.00	Total Expenditure	£5626.00
Opening Balance 2023	£2858.85	Closing Balance	£1795.85
TOTAL	£7421.85	TOTAL	£7421.85

Financial Overview

Please note the accounting year runs from November to October. This allows receipts for advertising to appear in the year the advert actually appears.

Total expenditure exceeds income, but this is because a transfer of funds to the Church main account was affordable and was larger than previous years.

Relatively few subscribers cancelled their subscriptions.

Colin Needle (Editor) Adrian Cale (Finance)

FINEDON MULSO CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL 2024

The school has continued to thrive during the previous twelve months. It has built on the success of the previous year's Ofsted inspection; pupils continue to achieve well and make good progress. Behaviour in the school is good; the school is a calm place.

The governors, through the Ethos Group continue to carry out the monitoring programme of the school as a church school. This has included looking at provision in RE and observing collective worship as well as the impact of the school's ethos and Christian Values on the pupils. At its meetings, the Ethos Group, which consists of relevant members of staff, foundation governors and the Trust representative have looked carefully at the Church School Inspection Framework to make themselves more aware of requirements. I am also a member of this group in a non-voting capacity.

In my consultancy role I have continued to monitor provision and have looked in particular at RE, which is in good heart. I have been working with the school, at their request, on identifying opportunities for pupils' spiritual development in different areas of the curriculum. Spirituality is a growing area within church schools; it is not necessarily a religious term but looks at opportunities for pupils to explore themselves and be more aware of the world around them.

One of the biggest joys in the previous twelve months has been the re-establishment of close links between the school and the church which have not been as strong in the recent past. Members of the church have been involved in leading Prayer Space activities twice per year with the continued involvement of Pauline Clark, who is one of the foundation governors. Towards the end of the year members of our church started to present Open the Book. This is a way of presenting Bible Stories to children in an imaginative and interactive way. A group of approximately 15 members of our congregation have offered to take part in this on a rota basis. The first one was entitled Follow the Star delivered during Advent which was well received by pupils. Open the Book Worship will happen once each half term.

Reverend Morna has cemented the closer links between church and school and has led worship on a few occasions since her induction last September. She has also joined the governing body as a foundation governor. The school also provided a display for the Christmas Tree Festival. The school used the church for its Easter Service, Year 6 Leavers Service, Harvest and Christmas services, all which, apart from the Leavers Service, included pupils from the Infant School. When both schools attend, along with many of their parents, it is literally standing room only and so lovely to see our church packed and resounding to the joyful singing.

Other activities of note were the visit of the Watoto choir who performed both in church and in school; an outdoor quiet area has been developed; the school has run a Happiness Club for designated pupils on the recommendation of their teacher, this includes various activities and workshops designed to promote better mental health.

Pete Grindrod

ST MICHAEL'S MISSION ROOM YEAR ENDING 31.12.24

It is always a pleasure to present the report for the Mission Room, everything seems to point in one direction – up.

Last year I reported that the lettings have exceeded £5000. This year has been even better, a figure of £6,300, some of this increase is due to the levy of £1 per hour increase applied in early 2025.

Comments from users are always complimentary and we thank our caretaker/cleaner for the condition of the hall.

Some items we cannot control, i.e. heating/lighting, but as a result of fitting a new boiler we have saved £367 against last year's figure.

The hall is used every 3rd Thursday by the church for the Outreach Coffee Mornings, this has proved very successful.

Brian Foster
on behalf of the Mission Room Management Team

MOTHERS' UNION - ANNUAL REPORT

Current committee members: Christine Chapman, Carole Mitchell, Jose Minney and Pat Parker.

We held our AGM in January 2024 and committee members were re-elected.

In February Carolyn Smith entertained us with a Finedon quiz. In March we held our Lent Communion Service in church. Juliette Dunkley visited us in April to tell us about a Japanese wedding and Alan Mayes returned in May to talk about Sir Christopher Wren. Adrian Cale brought a little bit of magic in June and we enjoyed our Strawberry Tea in July when we were once again joined by other friends and some members from Irthlingborough MU. Some members attended a "Quiet Day" at All Saints Church, Wellingborough in August. Valerie Anslow joined us in September to talk about The Daylight Centre. It was a shame that we were unable to represent Finedon at the Diocesan Festival at Peterborough Cathedral this year as this was held on 14 September during our flower festival weekend.

We were very pleased that our new vicar Reverend Morna came along to lead our Wave of Prayer service in October and we welcomed back Sue Deacon with her guitar for some very inspirational words and music in November. One again we held our Christmas lunch in December with members contributing food and drink.

Some of our members joined other Higham Deanery members for the Advent Deanery Service which was held at Irchester Parish Church on 5th December.

Committee members have kept in touch with other members in the diocese at deanery meetings in Irchester and the Forum meetings in Wollaston.

We have prepared a programme for 2025 and hope that members will continue to come along to enjoy our meetings and fellowship together. We continue to meet at The Mission Room on the first Tuesday of each month. Why not come along and join us. Visitors are always welcome. We usually start with a short service and there is always a cuppa and a chat.

Pat Parker

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING REPORT

Introduction

In your APCM papers you will have previously received a Website report for your review, however over the last 12 months our digital presence has grown as well as the role our website plays having also grown. The website, Facebook page and other communication tools have now fallen under the slightly grander title of “Social Media and Marketing” this doesn’t just encompass our digital presence but also our printed communications too. Digital media we are currently using includes:

- Church Website (stmarysfinedon.co.uk)
- Facebook
- A Church Near You
- YouTube

Printed media we are currently using includes:

- Parish Magazine
- Flyers and Posters
- Sunday Sheet
- Order of Service (Special Services)

Throughout the past year you will hopefully have noticed that the above items have all started to share a common look and feel, this is all part of wider efforts to make all of our media, whether printed or digital, part of one consistent brand. We want to ensure that however people come into contact with our church community, they are able to quickly identify us and start to get a sense of familiarity with our media and ultimately our church.

The adoption of a consistent brand and refresh of St Mary’s image began with the updating of the Parish Profile to accompany the job advert for a new incumbent. The PCC were keen that the new Parish Profile had a modern feel and reflected the vibrancy of our church family. Building on the incredible foundations made by Pete Grindrod who had collated the previous version, we formed a new profile which was incredibly well received by the Diocese.

Spurred on by the positive reception of the profile we began the slow transition to a more widespread adoption of the brand. Facebook graphics started to reflect this refreshed look from February 2024, with the website following suit on Easter Sunday. Gradually event posters, flyers, offertory cards, service books and more all began to be reworked.

All of these changes, whilst they may not have impacted weekly attendees, have had a positive impact on our occasional and one off visitors. By the time we reached September and Reverend Morna’s induction service we had a much stronger online presence and, when on show to the rest of the diocese, projected a professional and well organised appearance.

The following sections will break down key areas and campaigns across the last 12 months, with a particular focus on areas of success which can be built upon in the coming months and years.

Website

The refreshed website was launched on April 1st in order to streamline information, give it a more modern look and serve to better reflect our church.

The website was one of our primary tools to communicate our Advent/Christmas services and events to our audience. A dedicated “Advent” page on our website went live in early November and was linked to from Facebook posts, the schools weekly newsletter and our Advent flyers.

The visitor tracker which was installed on 20th September has shown the following data:

- In total we have had 13,777 total page views across a total of 3,874 visitors.

In the last 30 days (up to December 31st) we have seen:

- 3,257 page views

- 751 visitors

In order to optimise the frequency we are updating the website, the types of updates have fallen into the below categories.

Weekly Updates:

- Each week the website is updated with the latest weekly sheet (available as a PDF download) with 4 weeks of Sunday sheets being accessible to view at any one time.
- The site homepage is updated weekly with details of the floodlight sponsorships.

Monthly Updates:

- The information about upcoming services is updated monthly.
- A small number of articles from the parish magazine are posted as news articles, these include “From the Vicarage”, “From the Churchwardens” and any topical pieces which need a wider reach, such as details of Christian Aid Week.

Ad Hoc Updates:

- Information about Upcoming Events or event specific homepage banners are updated on an ad-hoc basis when necessary.

A Church Near You

Our “A Church Near You” (ACNY) page is part of the Church of England’s online platform to find church communities, services and events in your local area. This page is not updated as frequently as the website, only with details of upcoming services and key news (such as appointing a new incumbent). The metrics for this page (taken on 31st December) were:

- 180 page views in the last 7 days
- 1,121 page views in the last 30 days
- 7,964 page views in the last 365 days

As part of Advent, our ACNY page was updated to reflect the Church of England’s “Follow the Star” branding and all of our additional services were added into our events calendar.

Fundamentally ACNY is a free resource offered to us by the Church of England, any traffic we gain and any increase in service or event attendance is a bonus as there is minimal time investment required to keep this page up to date, particularly given the content we are producing across other platforms.

Facebook

Having aimed to grow our Facebook audience over the last few months we ended 2024 with just over 400 members of our Facebook page which is in line with where we had hoped to be.

Our top 3 posts for user engagement were (last 60 days):

1. Reverend Richard Coming 3rd in the Jungle (28,362 views, 60 likes, 6 comments)
2. Advent Invitation Video (718 views, 23 likes, 4 comments)
3. Post Christmas Fayre photos (747 views, 16 likes, 2 comments)

We saw a large amount of engagement on our Facebook posts in and around the Christmas Tree Festival and the start of Advent. As Richard was announced as an “I’m A Celeb” contestant we used this to create some light hearted content and try to gain followers who may not have engaged with our traditional posts. These activities delivered an increase in group members. Throughout Advent and Christmas we maintained frequent posts for services, events, weekly schedules largely with consistent visuals to tie in with “Follow the Star”. In the build up to Lent we plan on taking the opportunity to prepare a larger amount of video content enabling us to be more proactive with scheduling posts rather than being reactive. Additionally a St Mary’s page has been set up, which for the time being is posting within our Facebook group, giving a more professional look to our posts. Posting permissions within the group have now also been restricted so that administrators are able to review and approve posts before they are seen by a wider audience.

Induction

One of the biggest events for us this year was the licensing and induction service for Revered Morna Simpson, primarily due to the large number of visitors attending from across the Diocese and further afield.

From printed and digital invites circulated to guests, service booklet, signage and online content there was a large amount of information to communicate. The service booklet was described by the Bishop of Peterborough as one of the best she has seen!

In the build up to the event we had planned a number of Facebook posts circulating information about the event such as parking provision and service information, this included posts specifically about Reverend Morna (including a short introduction video) in order to begin to get her known around the parish so that people feel comfortable to approach her and also visit us here at St Marys (after the Parish Profile Video, this was one of the first pieces of video content we have produced).

Additionally for the service, noticeboards were updated with all upcoming service and event information. We also trialled a digital service information screen for the first time to add an additional level of accessibility to the service. (This digital screen returned for the Flower Festival with service, event and fundraising information cycling throughout the weekend).

Our Facebook posts both prior to and reflecting on this service had seen some of our highest levels of engagement both from members of our immediate church community and the wider diocese. Following the service, a summary article was published on the website which was well received.

Follow the Star

Throughout the year the Church of England produce a number of resources for churches to use across their digital presence, these are available to access through the A Church Near You editor portal. Advent and Christmas 2024's resource pack was themed "Follow the Star: Calm and Bright". This resource pack was incredibly useful giving a concise set of guidelines by which churches can adapt and utilise a small set of assets to suit their own needs. This essentially gave us a colour palette, a logo and text resources from which we could develop our digital and printed marketing materials. Lent 2024 we had developed from scratch in-house, whereas having a basic set of resources to work from saved time and allowed us to tie in with the overall C of E campaign and graphics. We produced printed flyers which listed all of our Advent/Christmas services and events which were distributed during the Christmas Tree Festival, Town Fayre as well as at Sunday and School services. The services list was also included as part of the printed programme for the Christmas Tree Festival. In person in church, we had an LED Star on top of the rood screen which was reflected in our digital media and served as a physical focus for the "Follow the Star" campaign.

Photo and video content appeared across our digital platforms throughout December which included messages from Reverend Morna, photos from events and information about upcoming services.

675 years

2025 marks the 675th birthday of St Mary's.

On our website and social media platforms we will be running regular articles delivering content throughout the year encouraging people to engage with our events and donate to support the future of St Mary's to preserve the building as a community asset for future generations.

Each quarter will be themed to give an overarching narrative to the year. Proposed quarterly themes are:

Months	Theme	Ideas
Jan-Mar	Stories	Asking people to share their stories of St Mary's from Sunday school activities, to life events and everything in between. Stories can be accompanied by photos and be published onto the website.

Apr-Jun	History	Digging into the archives and using interesting stories from the buildings history. Produce a few short documentary style videos about the church. Possible revision and reprint of Church History booklet. June 14th - History Open Day followed by Beer and Hymns
Jul-Sep	Celebration	Sunday 14th September, service of celebration.
Oct-Dec	Future	Reflection on the preceding months with a shift to focus on the reordering project and ways in which St Mary's is and will continue to serve its community.

All key 675th anniversary celebrations could serve as fundraising for the reordering project. A full breakdown of the 675th Anniversary and Reordering will be published onto the website giving details of the celebrations, and the wider project explaining the benefits it will offer to our church family and the wider community.

Upcoming Campaigns

Whilst our branding and theming for Lent and Easter 2024 was developed in house, 2025 will see us tie in with the Church of England by utilising their "Living Hope" set of resources which is due to launch in February. "In Lent we journey with Jesus on the difficult and thorny road that leads all the way to the cross on Good Friday – and beyond, to the transformation of Easter Day. God invites us to bring to him our own journey through everyday life. In the disappointment of daily setbacks and the pain of deeper hurts, we discover that God is present with us. And God promises a future where all things are healed and made new. Living Hope offers us the opportunity to deepen our hope in God and be part of what God is doing to bring hope in the world." (*Church of England Website – Living Hope*)

As well as Lenten prayer books Church House Publishing are also producing a daily challenge for children and their wider family called "A Lent Journey for Children" which may be beneficial to explore, having had such a large turnout for the Christingle it would be nice to offer a service of activities during the Lent/Easter period which tries to encourage a similar attendance.

Another significant upcoming campaign will be to fundraise for the re-ordering project now that we have received faculty approval from the Diocesan Advisory Committee. The PCC have set up a steering group comprising of individuals both on the PCC and those from within the congregation. This steering group will work to apply for grants, seek sponsorships from local business and organisations as well as lead fundraising campaigns with the support of the events team.

It is fortunate that we are also celebrating our 675th anniversary in 2025 as it allows us the opportunity to reflect on St Mary's past and how we are looking to secure our future in order to remain at the centre of community life here in Finedon.

CHURCH TOTE

1st January - December 31st 2024

At the end of December 2024 the Church Tote had a total of 191 shares showing an income of £2284 for the year. This was divided between prize money and the Church fund, both receiving £1142 each for the year.

The Church tote has been running since 1982, during this time an amazing £76,547.27 has been raised for the Church.

My thanks go to the nine collectors who have dedicated their time to the church tote over many years.

Kathy Hobbs

Church Tote Organiser

SATURDAY ACTIVITIES

Craft & Chat

We have been very lucky this year to have had some new ladies join us and they have been very generous and supportive of the group and St Mary's craft stall. In addition to this a special mention to all those who cannot join us for various reasons but continue to support, whether it's for the craft stall or the various external charities we try to help. With all the talents of so many, the sale of items (including fete/Flower and Christmas Tree festivals) from this year comes to a total of approximately £626. This is in addition to items made and donated to other charities such as Hearts Healing Hearts, a national charity supporting the bereaved and Baby Basics with cardigans, hats and fabric bags for new and vulnerable mums. The heating in October saw us move into the meeting room as it is heated independently. It also offers better lighting and creates a cosy group atmosphere. It was decided to cancel the December meeting so that we could support the Town Council Fayre which clashed on the same day. The donation box total this year was £67 and as previously documented this has been paid into the re-ordering fund. We will continue to offer the Craft & Chat Group and hope to encourage more people to join us and share their ideas and help with creating in 2025.

Family Funday

Numbers have been up and down for 2024. Unfortunately, we had to cancel April's session and again we took the decision to cancel December's session in order to concentrate on the Christingle service. Supporting the Town Fayre at the beginning of December with a free children's make and take table proved popular and gave us the opportunity to talk to parents and invite them to the Christingle service and let them know about our Funday activities. We hope to repeat this in the New Year by supporting other events offering free make and takes. We successfully received 2 grants; £200 from Finedon Children's Charity and £500 from the Diocese under their Gen2 grant scheme. To date this money hasn't yet been used. The Gen2 grant does stipulate that we must provide pictures and a write-up of how we spent the grant by April 2025. It's time to make changes and look at how we interact with families to connect them with the Church and how we communicate and advertise what we offer. We also need to look at what we can offer older children in the New Year. Currently there is £8.30 in cash in hand.
Julie Kightley and Julia Havlickova

RINGING THE BELLS AT THE CHURCH OF ST MARY FINEDON 2024

Bellringing has continued at St Mary's, though we have not been able to ring every Sunday. Currently we aim to ring the bells for the morning service on the second and fourth Sundays in the month. We also practice alternate Thursdays for about an hour, ringing five bell methods in the main.

We have been helped during the past year by a regular visitor, Paul Salter, who lives locally, but is a member of the band at Isham. He has enabled us to continue to practice regularly and often helps us to ring on a Sunday.

Unfortunately Arthur Knowles has resigned from ringing and Mark Butts has not been well enough to ring. The band therefore consists of Brian Foster, Bryan Chapman, Julie Havlickova, John and Janet Beresford, we are therefore in serious need of new ringers if we are to continue. John is currently teaching one new ringer, but we could do with more, as we can only ring all eight bells when there is a visiting band.

Despite the lack of local ringers, we have been able to ring for four weddings during the year and for the inauguration service of our new vicar Reverend Morna Simpson.

John Beresford
Tower Captain
St Mary's Finedon

VICAR'S REPORT

Having been licensed in September to St Mary the Virgin, Finedon, I feel that we have made good progress over the last few months. The licensing service was a joyful event and I have continued to feel the support of churchwardens and the PCC since then. I have noticed a spiritual hunger in Finedon and a desire for discipleship within a number of people within the church.

One change that was made fairly swiftly was moving the midweek service from a Wednesday to a Tuesday at 11am due to my schedule with diocesan work. This has been well received and the congregation has adapted well. In addition to that we have purchased service books for the midweek Holy Communion service, and for the principal service on a Sunday morning, both of which have been generally welcomed.

A number of events have happened as they normally would, but I have made it a priority to build links with the schools – Finedon Mulso Junior C of E School in particular. I am going in monthly to lead Collective Worship, as well as supporting a wider group from church to offer Open the Book on a termly basis. We have also welcomed the school into church for their Harvest and Christmas services, both of which were joyful occasions with the church filled to the brim with pupils, staff and families.


Over Advent I led a short Bible Study course on Creation and how it points to Jesus which was attended regularly by a small but faithful group of people. Prior to this I had established a weekly Prayer Meeting which helped me to discern where God might be calling us to in this new phase of our journey together. This will be followed up in the New Year with a PCC Away Day where we will concentrate on our vision.

There was a good attendance for each of our Christmas services and the Christingle service, in particular, felt like a great opportunity to connect with the wider community. I have really enjoyed my first few months within this church community and am so grateful to each of my churchwardens for their varied and extensive work behind the scenes. I am also aware that there are a number of willing volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make events such as the Flower Festival and the Christmas Tree Festival happen; thank you to all of you. I look forward to a bright future, where we journey together with God where God leads us.

Every blessing,



Vicar

St Mary the Virgin
Finedon 

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St Mary the Virgin | Finedon

**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN FINEDON
ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
FOR THE ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS
TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY 6th APRIL 2025 AT 11.00 AM
AT THE PARISH CHURCH**

AGENDA

1. Opening of meeting and prayer
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners for the election of Churchwardens held on 28th April 2024
4. Matters Arising from the Minutes
5. Election of Churchwardens

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners
for the Election of Churchwardens
Held at the Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin Finedon
on 28th April 2024 at 11.00 am**

Officers Present:

Jane Read Vice Chair/Churchwarden
Barry Wadeson Churchwarden

Others present:
30 Parishioners

1. The meeting was opened with a prayer led by Jane Read
2. Apologies were received from: Brian Foster; Gill Foster
3. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners for the election of Churchwardens held on 23rd April 2023 proposed by Malcolm Needle, seconded by Carole Mitchell were accepted as a true and accurate record.
4. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
5. Election of Churchwardens
Two nominations had been received
Julie Kightley proposed by Jean Marlow seconded by Peter Grindrod
Colin Needle proposed by Peter Grindrod seconded by Julie Kightley

The two candidates had expressed their willingness to serve. The proposals were unanimously supported by those present. There being no objections Julie Kightley and Colin Needle were declared elected as Churchwardens, the appointment to commence from the date of the Archdeacon's Visitation.

Jane Read relinquished the role of vice chair of the meeting. Colin Needle was subsequently appointed vice chair as churchwarden designate.



St Mary the Virgin | Finedon

**PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN FINEDON
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY 6th APRIL 2025 AT 11.00 AM
AT THE PARISH CHURCH**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 28th April 2024
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Report on Electoral Roll
5. Report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the parish
6. Report under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018 Fabric, Goods and Ornaments and the Terrier Inventory
7. Report from the Deanery Synod
8. Reports from Church Organisations
9. Vicar's Report
10. Financial Statements for year ending 31st December 2024
11. Appointment of independent examiner for the accounts year ending 31st December 2025
12. Term of Office of Members of the Laity
13. Election of 9 members of the Laity to the PCC
14. Closing Prayer



St Mary the Virgin | Finedon

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners Held at the Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin Finedon on 28th April 2024 at 11.00 am

Officers Present:

Colin Needle	Vice Chair/Churchwarden designate
Julie Kightley	Churchwarden designate

30 Parishioners attended the meeting.

1. Apologies were received from: Brian Foster; Gill Foster
2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on 23rd April 2023 proposed by Philip Powis, seconded by Christine Chapman were accepted as being a true and accurate record.
3. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
4. Report on Electoral Roll
It was reported by the Electoral Roll Officer there are 104 residents and 32 non residents making a total of 136 on the roll for 2024/25. A copy of the roll is available for inspection. The Electoral Roll Officer reported that renewal of the electoral roll will take place in 2025.
5. Report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the Parish
6. Report on Fabric, Goods and Ornaments and the Terrier Inventory
7. Report from the Deanery Synod
8. Reports from Church Organisations
Items 4 to 8 were presented to the meeting. Questions or comments were invited to be raised. There were none. Colin Needle thanked everyone who contributed to the Annual Report.
9. Financial Accounts for year ending 31st December 2023
The Financial Accounts had been approved by the PCC on 7th April 2024 and submitted to the independent examiner. To date her report had not been received.
The treasurer's summary of the financial statements was presented by Paul Harris.
The accounts were proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to be adopted subject to receipt of the report from the Independent Examiner.
10. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the Accounts for Year Ending 31st December 2024
It was proposed by Andrew Weatherill, seconded by Julie Kightley and unanimously agreed that Mrs K Brown would act as Independent Examiner for the accounts year ending 31st December 2024, she had previously expressed her willingness to do so.
11. Election of 12 Members of the Laity to the PCC
11 nominations had been received. All nominees had been on the electoral roll for over six months and had been proposed and seconded by members of the church on the electoral roll. There being less nominees than the number of 12 representatives of the laity required for the PCC, the following people were appointed for the period to the conclusion of the annual meeting following their election.

Bryan Chapman	Sheira Gee	Christian Needle	Andrew Weatherill
Christine Chapman	Peter Grindrod	Malcolm Needle	Joanne Weatherill
Neil Forster	Carole Mitchell	Philip Powis	

Barry Wadeson was thanked for his term of office as churchwarden and presented with a gift.

12. The meeting was closed with the saying of The Grace.