



Steyning Parish Church
of St Andrew & St Cuthman

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

**For the year 2024
held on 18 May 2025**

ANNUAL REPORTS
(1 January to 31 December 2024)

**From the PCC, Churchwardens
and Church Groups**

The contents page of this document carries a list of our usual Church Groups. Anyone who may be interested in joining any of the groups is asked to contact the Parish Church Office (tel: 01903 813276 or office@steyningparishchurch.org) for further information.

CONTENTS

PAGE No.	REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:
4	Proceedings of the PCC
4	<i>Welcome & Outreach, 5-yr Plan, Families & Children's Worker</i>
5	<i>Children's Worship, Open the Book</i>
6	Fabric
7	Communications Team
8	Generous Giving
9	Safeguarding
10	Storrington Deanery Synod
10	Reflections
11	Taizé Service
12	Choir
13	Music Group
13	Bellringers
14	Church Flowers
14	Holy Dusters
15	Churchyard
15	SAMS (St Andrew's & St Cuthman's Men's Society)
15	Wednesday Coffee
15	Pastoral Care and Good Grief Café
16	Social and Catering
16	Family Support Work (FSW)
17	Steining & District Churches Together (SDCT)
18	Penfold Hall
18	Prayer Group
19	Study Groups
19	<i>Penfold House Group; Grove House Group; Study Group;</i>
20	<i>Pilgrim Group</i>

Proceedings of the PCC

The Annual Parishioners Meeting took place on Sunday, 21 April 2024 following the 9:30am Eucharist. The meeting was chaired by the Vicar.

Bill Thomson was first elected as churchwarden in 2020. Two nominations for the post of churchwarden had been received and the Vicar was pleased to announce that Kate Burnett and Sarah Lavery were duly elected.

The Annual Parishioners Meeting was followed by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Christine Aubrey and Len Warner were re-elected to the PCC and Bill Thomson was elected to fill the vacancy on the Deanery Synod. Tina Hobbs was co-opted on the PCC at the short PCC meeting following the APCM. Adrian Bamforth was subsequently elected at the PCC meeting held on 17 July.

John Edwards served as PCC Treasurer until December 2024 when he was succeeded by Tina Hobbs. We record our thanks to John for his ten years' service as our Honorary Treasurer and for his continued membership of our Deanery Synod.

In 2024, PCC meetings took place on 31 January, 13 March, 21 April, 22 May, 17 July, 18 September and 13 November.

Welcome and Outreach

During 2024 attendance at our services increased to pre-Covid levels and we welcomed new members to our congregation. Our church building and the Penfold Hall were busy with music, art and community events and the popular Community Fridge and Art Trail made good use of Church Cottage.

5-year Plan

In 2024 we completed the third year of our 5-Year Plan which was agreed by the PCC in 2022. During 2024 we achieved over 80% of the outcomes identified in our 5-Year Plan including important medium- and longer-term milestones such as establishment of new home groups, start of Stewardship programme/Generous Giving initiative and employment of our Families & Children's worker. In some areas we have exceeded our targets, for example we were seeking a Bronze Eco Church award but achieved a Silver award. The 5-Year Plan Coordinating Group continues to meet to monitor and oversee progress although the activities identified in our 5-Year Plan have now been successfully absorbed into the programmes of our various church teams.

Families and Children's Work

During the first few months of 2024, fundraising and the recruitment process for the Families and Children's Worker post continued. We were successful in our application to the Diocesan Mission Fund for a grant of £30,000 for the post. This, together with generous contributions from our congregation, secured the funding needed for an initial three-year contract. Gary Pickett was appointed and took up the post in September 2024, focusing on children from 0 – 13 years of age and their families.

Gary has been tasked with building links with groups that work with children and families in our community.

Since Gary's arrival we have held a number of events including Hallowe'en Pitstop which had a number of crafts and board games but, most importantly, hot chocolate. We had well over 100 through the doors of the Penfold Hall that night. Our Advent Stir-Up had six different activities in the church - one of the most popular activities being the wreath-making enjoyed by all. Our Baby and Toddler Group 'Little Stars' held every Thursday is a very successful event, averaging 30 children and adults each week.

Gary and the team thank all volunteers who have been involved in setting up and running these events. Much has been achieved in the first few months of Gary's employment in this new role.

Children's Worship

In October we held a 4pm harvest-themed service aimed at families, which was well attended with positive feedback and it was agreed after that there should be an exploration of the possibility of more services like this. During December we held our annual Christingle and Crib Services, with an attendance of over 550 across the latter, on Christmas Eve. The third Sunday music group service has some engagement with families and children and hope to grow this engagement.

The vicar and wardens offer our grateful thanks to all who have worked with us during 2024 to build our church community and develop our plans for the future of our church.

Sarah Lavery, Churchwarden

Open the Book

Open the Book is now well-established in Steyning Primary School. A group of up to eight of us lead Collective Worship once every half term, presenting a range of New and Old Testament stories from the Bible Society's 'Open the Book' scheme. Since summer, we have led sessions for classes in Years 3, 4 and 5. Where possible we link the story with the school's RE syllabus, enabling pupils to experience what may be an already familiar theme in a different way. Pupils are invited to participate in quiet reflection and have the opportunity to pray with us in other important parts of the worship. In classroom sessions discussion, quiet reflection and a follow-up activity is included.

The church's involvement is always appreciated by staff and pupils alike. It is a privilege for us to be part of this rewarding outreach activity.

Rosie Harrison

Fabric

The Fabric Committee discussed and reported to the PCC on the following matters during 2024:

Membership of the Fabric Committee: The PCC approved a change to the membership of the Fabric Committee. Adrian Bamforth who has considerable expertise in matters relating to church fabric has joined the committee. Bill Thomson stood down as churchwarden and his role has been taken by Sarah Lavery. We thank Bill for his many years of service to the Fabric Committee, looking after the fabric of the church.

Tower: Progress on the tower works is dependent on funding being in place. The inside of the tower is still suffering from damp, particularly in the choir vestry and the spiral staircase. An electric dehumidifier has somewhat improved the dampness in the choir vestry. Security of the ringing chamber has been improved by the addition of a keycode padlock to the trap door. Ingress of water to the tower is not covered by our insurers, as not related to a specific event.

Fundraising: The Fabric Committee continue to be updated on developments with fundraising and planning for church improvements (reported separately), with tower repairs taking priority over the building improvement works. A leaflet has been produced and paid for by the Friends of Steyning Parish Church, summarising details of the proposed improvements.

South Door step: The step continues to be a hazard. A design has been produced for a handrail at the South door and additional quotations are being sought.

Conservator Issues: Advice has been obtained from Sally Strachey of SSHC on restoration works for the Cowerson gravestone, the corbel table, repairs and moving of the font, and repairs to the South door stone moulding.

Fire, Security & Safety: Health and Safety 'walk throughs' have been carried out and the Fire Risk Assessment has been updated. A tower evacuation exercise has been carried out and consideration is being given to arrangements for a safe evacuation exercise in the church. The old accident book was not compliant with GDPR and has been replaced with an improved reporting system. A programme of H&S briefings for church teams has been commenced. This to be continued until all church teams have been covered.

Churchyard: We have new neighbours - Guy Sanderson and his wife - in Gatewick House. Excellent dialogue has been established and they have offered to pay for improvements to the Shooting Field entrance of the churchyard, including a lighted arch as well as collaborating on work to trees. Planning permission has been obtained for works to trees in the churchyard which is in a conservation area. List B permission from the Diocese is awaited.

Minor works undertaken included:

- A loose corner tile from the lychgate roof has been secured to prevent the danger of it falling and causing injuries. A piece has been obtained for repair of the lychgate although this is not considered high priority.
- The office carpet which was infested with carpet moth has been replaced and improvements made to the office.
- New power points installed in the gardeners' tool shed.
- A number of minor plumbing works, leaks in church radiators, removal of redundant water heater from church WC.
- The faulty lighting units behind the altar have been replaced.
- An infestation of mice in the church has been resolved by BN Pest control with humane traps. The mouse problem in the cottage has also been resolved.
- Fire alarms were tested by Kestrel on 5/11/24.
- Problems with South and North door handles have been resolved.

Sarah Lavery

Communications Team

Our communications group, comprising vicar, churchwardens, magazine editor, plus Katherine Heather, Judie and Bill Thomson, and latterly our Families and Children's Worker Gary Pickett, met regularly throughout the year. We are basically responsible for keeping our church family informed as well as raising the profile of St Andrew's & St Cuthman's in the wider community. Our aim is to show that Steyning Parish Church is an inclusive, friendly, welcoming place for all. One of our first tasks was analysing the responses to the Gifts and Talents survey, which had resulted from the Bishop's church growth programme entitled 'Great is Thy Faithfulness' in which we had been invited to take part during the previous year. We are blessed with many people willing and able to take an active part in what we do and can always welcome more.

Our magazine continued to go from strength to strength and, deservedly, was recognised by the Association of Church Editors for its appeal to the intended readership. Chris, our editor, took away from the presentation event a number of ideas to make the magazine even better and those are gradually being incorporated. Since the end of the year Chris's poor health meant she would have to step back from editing the magazine – we thank her for all she has done to get it to where it is now. She and David are remembered in our prayers. Fortunately, the communications group has been able to carry on producing the magazine.

Our church website is surely one of the most comprehensive and informative of any church sites. We continue to update and improve this vital outward-facing publicity tool. A change of web host during the year has saved us money as well as giving us greater control over our internet presence.

Social media is proving another invaluable information aid. Judie has re-established our Facebook page, linking our posts to various local Facebook

groups. Gary's arrival raised our social media profile even further; we now have an Instagram account as well. During the run up to Christmas we had over 15,000 engagements with the Facebook page.

Gary's influence has extended to poster publicity; his impressive displays in the church porch and Penfold Hall help to reinforce what an active community we run. Thanks to Kate (churchwarden), we have a noticeboard outside the primary school where family events can be promoted. Kate is a 'Foundation Governor' as well as warden.

The ChurchSuite database helps a great deal in keeping in touch with our church family, as well as providing our calendar of events. Work has continued through the year to further develop ChurchSuite (church database software) so we can use it to send out the weekly bulletin and other mailings, and make the address book more generally available, so that those who are prepared to make even limited contact details available can enjoy the use of this invaluable communication resource.

We are using the fence west of the lychgate for banners publicising regular and one-off events. We purchased an 'A' board which is also being used to publicise events and services. We have a Welcome Pack which is given to newcomers, as well as welcoming contact cards on the pews. Also, a donor paid for a supply of prayer cards and a display stand which were put in the porch. These have proved popular, and we now have a second set in the prayer corner.

We are in close contact with the diocesan communications team; as a result, we have had several items in the 'Faith in Sussex' magazine, which helped raise our profile with the diocese and other churches in the area.

From the above it looks as if we have achieved a lot, but we are always conscious of other things that need to be done; we just seem to run out of time. So, if anybody has some of that valuable commodity – time – and skills that we could use, we would love to hear from you.

Communications Team

Generous Giving

The generosity of the congregation has excelled in 2024, particularly one very generous donation and pledge to enable a Families and Children's worker to be employed for 3 years and thus we welcomed Gary Pickett.

The congregation was asked to pledge additional sums by increasing their monthly giving and 50 kindly agreed to do so. During the year a majority of our congregation signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme, simplifying the recovery of Gift Aid and giving those who sign-up the option of uplifting their donations each year in line with inflation.

- 89 of our monthly donors pay by direct debit to the Parish Giving Scheme
- Seven pay by bankers' standing order to the Church
- Two use the weekly envelopes
- Two pay quarterly through the Charities Aid Foundation
- The planned giving and the recovery of Gift Aid thereon totalled £86,747 representing an overall increase of £9,890 on 2023.

It is incumbent on each and every one of us to regularly review our monthly donations to ensure that our committed giving increases year on year to keep pace with inflation and our diocesan commitment for our clergy, for the salaries of our organist and for the office administrator for running costs for local mission and Church repairs.

Leonard Warner (Stewardship Recorder)

Safeguarding

Over the past year, safeguarding activity within the parish has seen significant progress. The initial months were relatively quiet as I was recovering from surgery and unable to fully engage in safeguarding duties. However, the latter part of the year has seen a marked increase in activity and development.

Several new missional initiatives have been launched, including a Grief Café, a toddler group, and a junior church. These required the creation of clear role descriptions, comprehensive risk assessments, and the safe recruitment of volunteers in line with safeguarding best practices. Each step was undertaken with care to ensure that all activities provide a safe and supportive environment for both children and adults.

I am pleased to report that Fiona Aiton completed her Safeguarding Leadership Training during the year and was formally confirmed as a second Parish Safeguarding Officer alongside me. This has been a very welcome development. Among other things, Fiona has played an active role in maintaining up-to-date training records and has also supported individuals who find online training difficult by running in-person sessions.

We have produced a safeguarding induction pack for new volunteers. This pack includes key policies, contact information, and practical guidance to ensure that everyone joining a ministry or activity is aware of their responsibilities and the procedures in place.

We are grateful to all who have supported safeguarding efforts this year and look forward to building on these developments in the year ahead.

Christine Aubrey, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Storrington Deanery Synod

The first meeting of the Synod in 2024 was held at Ashington Parish Church on 8 February when there was a discussion to follow-up on the Bishop of Horsham's presentation at the previous November Synod. Members were asked to consider what is bearing fruit in our parishes and how are we growing and deepening our faith. In addition, we thought about the ways in which we help newcomers.

In May we had a Deanery study day at the Bishop's Palace in Chichester and, in October, fourteen from the Deanery went on a three-day pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham meeting up with a hundred or so pilgrims from other parts of England. It was considered to be very rewarding and will be scheduled into the programme for 2025.

The second meeting of the Synod took place at Storrington Parish Church in June when Catherine Dawkins, the Diocesan Finance Officer, gave an overview of the finances of the Church of England and of Chichester Diocese. She reminded us that the Diocese is dependent on the parish share which is a voluntary donation from the parishes. She said that regrettably there is likely to be a deficit of £1.4 million at the end of 2024.

In November John Preston, the fairly new Diocesan Secretary, came to introduce himself to the Synod and give us his thoughts on the likely future strategy for the Diocese to proclaim the Gospel more effectively, given the reduction in clergy numbers and the tightening budget. In the Diocese Anglicans are 4.6% of the population and those numbers decrease significantly when it comes to those under 18. Church House will aim to do more to help parishes bring the faith to the next generation.

Brian Hanson

Reflections

Reflections is now an established 6pm service at St Andrew's and St Cuthman's, usually held on the first Sunday of every month. This quiet, gentle and peaceful service offers space for contemplation and prayer and generally lasts around 40 minutes.

Each month the team take a seasonal or topical theme, which often also relates to the lectionary. At the core of Reflections, we always ensure there is a period of silence, and wrapped around this is a mix of Bible readings, prayers, poetry and music, sometimes classical or modern pieces, sacred or secular - depending on the 'reflection' of the theme. The service closes with prayers and a blessing.

We look to provide a comfortable space for those who may be less familiar with church 'routines', and we continue to be encouraged that there are those who attend who are not frequent churchgoers, as well as regular church members.

We include the texts for all the music and poetry in the order of service too, so that these may be taken away for further reading or reflection as wanted. We also leave service orders at the back of the church for people to pick up at other times should they so wish.

The themes chosen during 2024 were as follows: January - Pathways to God; February - Love; March – Faith; April – Hope; May - Holy Spirit; June -Peace; July – Thankfulness; August - Rest in the Lord; September – Prayer; October - Bread of Life; November -The Light of the Lord; December- Darkness to Light (so no Reflections).

We are encouraged by the positive feedback we receive, and are thankful for the help received from Pam Finnigan, Mary Evans and Gill Muncey with readings this past year. We are also especially pleased to have welcomed Robert Hill-Snook to the regular team. We remain grateful to Bill Thomson who continues to provide the beautiful orders of service and to Mary Penley who delivers posters round town. If anyone has an interest in reading at a Reflections service or would like to be involved creatively (perhaps for one or two services) you are very welcome - do have a word with anyone on the team. We only have meetings twice a year!

We look forward to another year of working together in this creative worshipful service.

Reflections team: Fiona Aiton, Neil Aiton, Catherine Berry, John Edwards, Robert Hill-Snook, Mary Penley, Judie Thomson, Bill Thomson.

Fiona Aiton

Taizé Service

The fourth Sunday in November saw the introduction of a Taizé Service into the regular worship at St Andrew' & St Cuthman's.

Taizé is a community of Brothers from all denominations near Cluny in the Burgundy region of France. It welcomes visitors especially, but not exclusively, younger people throughout the summer months and is famous for its music in the form of wonderful simple chants based on biblical quotes. The services are quiet and meditative, and as well as the Taizé Chants include a short bible reading and a period of silence for reflection on the reading, private prayer or meditation. They last around 35 minutes.

For further Information contact one of the Taizé team: David Littlejohns, Adrian Bamforth and Sarah Lavery.

Choir

I am pleased to begin this report by confirming that there are now 23 regular members of the choir on the register and nine guest singers who join us occasionally for choral evensong and other services. They all remain loyal to our tradition of choral music in worship. I am always anxious to recruit new people into the choir and was very pleased when Isla Humphreys was admitted as a full member after a period of training as a probationer. She has made excellent progress and has already reached RSCM Dark Blue standard of proficiency. I was also pleased to welcome Lilly Dodsworth into the choir as a probationer and Hannah Betts as an adult member.

The Good Friday Sacred Concert on 29 March 2024 was well supported by the congregation and local community. The choir was joined by members of the Chanctonbury Chorus and other guest singers for a performance of John Rutter's 'Requiem'. Helena van der Werff was the soloist in the Requiem, which was accompanied by a small orchestra of six players. Other pieces of music included the 'Ave Verum' by Mozart, 'Ex Ore Innocentium' by John Ireland, and Neil Aiton played a short chorale prelude by J. S. Bach. Fr Peter Attwood gave a reading by John-Francis Friendship.

Our annual December choral services: Darkness to Light, our Processional Advent Carol Service; and our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols Services are both very popular, and the congregational attendance continues to grow, which is very encouraging. The carol service gave opportunities for soloists in the choir to sing. The choir party after the carol service was enjoyed by everyone, as was the summer party held earlier in the year. Those two social events are very important for the choir.

The choir continues to sing the 9:30am Eucharist service weekly, choral evensong once a month and the major church festival services. The choir is affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music and the Director of Music follows its principles of voice training and music in worship.

A survey by the RSCM found that two-thirds of ecclesiastical choirs have no singers under the age of 18, which is certainly a great cause for concern. In conclusion I would say, given the difficulties generally of recruitment into church choirs, and without being too complacent, our choir continues to thrive and be enthusiastic.

Brian Sawyer. Organist and Director of Music

Music Group

The Music Group Eucharist service takes place on the third Sunday of every month.

We continue to follow the liturgical themes and choose music/songs each month which reflect this. We aim to use a balance of new songs and familiar worship songs and hymns. We also use Taizé style music for the intercessions and try to include other aspects of 'worship' such as the use of signing or actions, where appropriate, for children's songs.

Additional Contributions in 2024 include: Maundy Thursday evening service; Children's Family Fun Day May 2024; Healing Service May 2024; Pet Service September 2024; Family Harvest Service October 2024; FSW Concert Oct 2024; Advent Christingle Service Dec 2024; and two Crib services on Christmas Eve 2024.

We all mourn the loss of Malcolm who was such an integral part in the music group. He not only contributed by playing his guitar and singing, but also sharing his wisdom, creativity and above all his faith. He was very committed to worship, despite his busy schedule. Everyone in the group has their own special memory of Malcolm and there are many songs we sing which hold strong memories of him.

Malcolm was also instrumental in the idea of the music group taking part in school collective worship (which we now attend twice a term). He was passionate about music in the primary school generally, and he would have been thrilled with the collective charity concert organised by FSW in October last year which saw the newly formed school choir, church choir and music group all singing together, and which was such a successful event. We all miss him in so many ways but take comfort that he is with his father in glory. Our prayers continue for his family, and above all for Julia.

Looking ahead the music group has been invited to play at the Diocesan Family Camping Weekend in July 25 (postponed from summer 2024).

We enjoy working together as a team and prayerfully offering our worship in this way. Our aim – above all - is that through authentic worship others are able to encounter something of the presence of God.

Neil Aiton (on behalf of the team: Kate Burnett, Vanessa Knowles, Simon Knowles, Tamsin Ripley, Fiona Aiton)

Bellringers

It has been a fulfilling and active year for the bellringers, with both exciting new developments and continued support of community and church events. We were delighted to welcome three new recruits to the tower, all of whom have been learning to ring from scratch. Their enthusiasm and commitment has brought fresh energy to our team, and they are progressing well with their individual lessons on the basics of handling a bell, and will hopefully soon be joining us as regulars at practice nights. In addition to our new learners, we also

saw the return of a lapsed ringer who is new to Steyning tower, and they have quickly settled back into the rhythm and are now a regular valued member of the tower. Our band continues to meet regularly for Thursday practices and Sunday service ringing, and with all of the new joiners there is a real sense of camaraderie and support up the tower.

In 2024, the bells were rung for six funerals. We also had the pleasure of ringing for three weddings. These events are an important part of our service to the church and wider community, and we are always honoured to be a part of them.

A highlight of the year was our spring outing in April, where we toured five towers in East Sussex. It was a fantastic opportunity to experience different bells, enjoy spending time together, and we look forward to planning the next one in 2025.

With our new learners progressing well and the development of our existing ringers, we are looking forward to the year ahead. We hope to carry on developing our ringing, and being a valued part of the church and local community, and thank them for their continued support.

Emma Gadd

Church Flowers

Margaret Burgess, Julia Elliot and myself have continued to organise the flower arrangements in church with the assistance of a team of 18 enthusiastic helpers. The altar flowers are provided every week, apart from Lent and Advent, and the church is decorated for Easter, Harvest Festival and Christmas.

We are also willing to undertake, with prior notice, any particular arrangements for weddings, funerals or other memorial services in the church. Everyone gives of their time freely, so any profit made from this charitable enterprise, the Church Flower Fund, is used for the purchase of any flowers bought during the year.

For anyone who would like to have fun with flowers, and can spare whatever time they have to assist us, there is always a member of the team who would willingly give help and support. We were delighted to welcome into our team four new members: Katherine Heather, Carol Lathlieff, Jayne Meyler and Lindsay Sharrier, who will contribute as a great boost to the annual rota.

Carol McKechnie

Holy Dusters

The Holy Dusters meet every fortnight, just for an hour, from 9am on Saturdays. We are a group of 13, keeping our beautiful church clean. If you are interested in joining us, please speak to Mary Bateman, our coordinator, or one of the churchwardens.

Kate Burnett, Churchwarden

Churchyard

Having taken on responsibility for the Churchyard with Robert Hill-Snook, we have set to with our superb band of helpers. Without them and their graft, little would be possible but all have just one aim, a beautiful Churchyard.

Over this year we aim to create different types of wildlife areas, pilot wildflower patches to see what flowers take well to the ground. Start the cutting back of some individual trees or areas that have overgrown, subject to the necessary permissions, and lastly try out a new grass maintenance scheme which will include different lengths of grass throughout the Churchyard.

I thank everyone for their support, but action costs money and some will have to be found to carry out our essential tree works in the next two years.

Simon Knowles

SAMS (St Andrew's & St Cuthman's Men's Society)

We enjoyed five meetings during the year

We started the year in March with a talk by me on the inns and public houses in Steyning over the past 500 years. In May, Revd Peter Attwood gave a talk entitled 'Collared' with an interesting and amusing account of his life prior to ordination. In July, Donald Flatt gave us an interesting account of his early and working life to be continued next year with a further instalment. In September, Larry Culliford spoke of his spiritual journey to faraway countries with a talk entitled 'As happy as Larry'. And finally in November, we welcomed back Steve McGrath who gave us a most thought-provoking account of his life entitled 'A long way round'.

We meet at the Penfold Hall usually on the last Tuesday of every other month at 3:45 pm to enjoy a glass or two of wine and crisps and are finished by 5:30pm.

We welcome all men of faith to join us.

Leonard Warner (Chairman)

Wednesday Coffee

Our coffee mornings continued to thrive throughout 2024. We are so fortunate that we can use the Penfold Hall, which has good level access from the Library car park. This is a blessing because two of our regular visitors use their mobility scooters to travel to us.

We do not advertise a specific price for the coffee, tea and biscuits served to our visitors however we do ask for contributions for their drink and biscuits which will be used towards our costs and to make donations to charity. We made a regular contribution towards the weekly running costs of the Penfold Hall and have made a significant contribution towards planned essential building works. The remaining money we collected enabled us to make the following charitable donations: Turning Tides; Family Support Work (FSW);

Heron's Dale School in Shoreham; Steyning Mini Bus; St Barnabas Hospice (£100 each), and also a donation of £200 to the campaign to buy a new helicopter for the Kent & Sussex Air Ambulance.

We are fortunate to have enough volunteers to be able to work in four teams of three or four people. That means that apart from occasional fifth Wednesdays, we are only committed to work on one Wednesday a month. However, you often see us coming in for a coffee as a visitor on our weeks off! We were pleased when one new volunteer joined us this year. Most of our volunteers worship at Steyning Parish Church, however some do not but are happy to join this valuable outreach into our community.

Elizabeth Brown

Pastoral Care and Good Grief Café

2024 saw the continuation of our pastoral care of the congregation and the wider community as needed, to support Fr Mark. The fully trained team numbers 13, including those who offer Home Communion, with an additional member joining during the year. Support is given through home visits and telephone calls.

As planned, we were able to set up a monthly grief café in November to support those in our congregation and parish suffering any sort of loss. There are six volunteers mainly from the pastoral care team, who run this monthly event, ably supported by a couple of congregation members who take care of refreshments. The event is published widely in the community.

Judie Thomson

Social and Catering

Again, 2024 has not been a busy year for the Social & Catering Committee. However, we made cakes for various celebrations throughout the church year including Harvest and All Souls'. Our thanks to those of our congregation who helped us with the baking. Members of our team also helped at other events but which had been organised by others.

In June and July, we provided refreshments at two social gatherings at the Vicarage hosted by the Vicar and his wife Katherine.

Pat Edwards

Family Support Work (FSW)

We started the year with our Easter Egg collection in Church which, together with the usual food basket, was distributed in time for Easter Day. Once again people's generosity was incredible.

We held our annual FSW Coffee Morning in June and it was a wonderful success raising over £1000 to help our families going through difficult times. Tamzin organised a marvellous raffle with hampers filled with really original gifts.

In October we organised our first FSW Musical Extravaganza which we will hope to repeat this year. It featured our church choir, the church music group with special guest stars being Steyning Primary School Choir. It was a good chance for further outreach in the community.

Harvest Festival in October gave us another opportunity to collect more gifts of food for our FSW families together with monetary gifts, which are such a great help with the enormous heating bills everyone has faced this winter.

The cutbacks brought in by the Government have greatly affected all Charities so we are, as usual, so very appreciative for the support of our congregation and the wider community.

The Steyning FSW Team

Steyning and District Churches Together (SDCT)

Throughout 2024 services were held at Croft Meadow by teams of people from churches in SDCT. Fr Mark, Chris Fitton, Vanessa Knowles and Kate Burnett led many of the monthly services. Deacon Simon Wright and Sister Patrick led services on behalf of the Church of Christ the King, and Maggie Broad and David Beazly took the lead on other months on behalf of The Hub Baptist Church. These services are planned for the residents but their visitors and anyone from any of our churches who wishes to join in are welcome.

There were vigils for the people of Ukraine held once a month in the grounds of the Church of Christ the King, which are level, so that people are able to stand together. By the end of the year these had become 'Peace in the world' prayers by prayer groups and as part of intercessions within our services.

The year started with an agape service at Steyning Methodist Church. Revd Stephen Donnison led the prayerful service and accompanied us on his guitar singing hymns before we shared fruit rolls and soft drinks.

Our presence together included the Steyning Festival Family Day on Friday 31 May. Sarah Lavery organised dancing and arts and crafts in our church. It was well attended. This was followed by worshipping together at the Steyning Festival closing service hosted at St Andrew's & St Cuthman's on Sunday 2 June.

In October there was a well-attended Breakfast meeting hosted at The Hub. Gerry Howett, CEO of Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team, spoke movingly about the very valuable work done by this organisation.

Carol singing in the Farmers Market was rather different due to high winds. The market was relocated to Steyning Primary School's hall. A scratch choir managed to step up to the stage and sing well known carols for nearly an hour. Thankfully Kate Burnett accompanied us on her keyboard.

In addition, £863 was raised for Christian Aid at a coffee morning in the Penfold Hall which would not have been so successful without the hard work and support from volunteers, both from our church and members of the SDCT churches.

2024 was a challenging year. Our Ashurst committee member Linda Thornton resigned. She was on the committee for several years and an active member of St James's Church, Ashurst. However, we were fortunate that Ann Hanson has joined the committee as our representative at Ashurst. Sadly Pam Perry, who proved to be excellent in her role as Secretary for SDCT, died suddenly in June. Unfortunately, despite requests for someone to work with me on the committee no-one in our church has come forward.

Elizabeth Brown

Penfold Hall

The Penfold Hall continued to attract a small core of regular users alongside some occasional users and bookings for children's parties. It also supported the Cub and Beaver movement who met for two sessions per week during school terms. Income from bookings was greater than in 2023 but the PCC needed to meet the cost of gas and electricity as well as booking and website costs. The Hall was also used for Wednesday Coffee and other church events.

Problems caused by subsidence and the cracks in the back wall have gradually become more serious. The large hall, the old National School, is a Listed Building and Horsham District Council approved a scheme for the repairs. Thanks to the generosity of the Wilson Trust and the legacy of the late Millicent Honeywood, the Church Council was able to appoint Pilbeam Construction Limited, based in Southwick, to carry out the underpinning, strengthening the wall and other repairs. It is expected that work will be completed by the summer of 2025 and it will be quite safe for the other parts of the Penfold Hall to be used whilst the work is being carried out.

We are grateful for the work of Neil Chappell, the caretaker, Gail Awcock who keeps it clean and particular thanks to Ian and Mary Ivatt who retired at the end of 2024, having looked after the finance since 2016.

John Edwards

Prayer Group

We continue to meet at one home venue on the first Monday morning of each month with adjustments for the inevitable bank holiday!

There are now eight of us regularly, which seems to be the maximum for physical comfort; the more intimate ambience of a small group also helps to maintain the quiet dignity and sincerity of our prayers. These are centred around the prayer requests from the prayer tree in church, but also include requests for people named through the various church links and the wider church family, and our own personal prayers. Although centred around requests, our prayers also include praise and thanksgiving.

We feel sure there is scope for other prayer groups, as prayer is so vital to our Christian journey.

Mary Travers

Study Groups

Penfold House Group

We made a slow start to 2024 but gained momentum, finishing the Pilgrim course on The Lord's Prayer. We took part in the diocesan Lent course and moved on to the Pilgrim course on the Beatitudes. In between we continued to explore the readings from the previous Sunday's service.

We continue to meet in each other's house on the second and fourth Tuesday mornings of each month, with a summer break.

During the year we were saddened to hear of the death of Felicity Prescott who had founded the group with her husband Charles in 2007/8.

Once again, we very much valued the meeting in November when Fr Mark was able to come and celebrate Holy Communion with us.

Mary Travers

Grove House Group

We are a group of ten members and meet at the home of John and Pat Edwards twice a month. During 2024 we studied a past Lent Course: Glimpses of God and also the Beatitudes. We found our discussions, led by John, stimulating, informative, interesting and helpful.

We begin each session with a time of prayer for our needs and those of others. We find great support within our group and feel free to voice our concerns in an atmosphere of trust and care.

We aim to have a lunch gathering each year and again are grateful to Pat and John for hosting us.

Maureen Jones

Study Group

We continue to meet at 7.30pm on the first Wednesday of the month in the Penfold Hall. Members volunteer to lead individual sessions, ensuring a range of approaches. There are currently 13 members in our group, but it is rare for all attend at once. We are happy to welcome others seeking to explore their faith through the Scriptures, especially those who are not free during the daytime. Please contact me via the Parish Office if you would like to join us.

Last year was marked by the sudden illness and death of our beloved friend and long-time member of the group, Malcolm Donaldson. Malcolm was always ready to lead or contribute, and would arrive with a much-annotated bible, deep questions and sometimes a guitar. We are truly privileged to have known his profound faith, spiritual thoughtfulness and care for each one of us, as well as his sense of fun. His approach to dying, as his condition worsened, was an inspiration to us all, and we miss him greatly.

After following the diocesan Lent course in 2024, we studied 'The Creeds' stage of the Church of England Pilgrim course throughout the summer. We found it helpful to consider more deeply the familiar words which can so easily

be taken for granted. At our December meeting, we looked at a variety of potential courses for 2025. We chose 'The "I am" Sayings of Christ', by Douglas Connelly. This course particularly encourages personal reflection within the group.

We thank Fr Mark for celebrating Holy Communion with us in August, and Chris and David for their kind hospitality, and to Marina for inviting us to her beautiful home for our Christmas social. As ever, thanks go to Neil Chappell for making sure the hall is always warm and welcoming.

Catherine Berry, Co-ordinator

Pilgrim Group

This year we have been delighted to welcome two new members to the group, so we are now eight in total, but are always very open to others joining!

We started our year by continuing to study the Church of England's 'Course for the Christian Journey', looking at the Beatitudes and the Creeds. In this in-depth study, we felt we gained greatly in understanding and appreciation of words that we say regularly in church.

After this, we felt we would like a new challenge, so we are now studying the Gospel of Luke. We continue to discover, grow and learn together using different media, such as film, art, pictures, music and word. These different forms of learning create interesting discussion (as well as much laughter along the way!)

Vanessa Knowles