

This year we've had a good number of baptisms and thanksgivings – some of which I have taken at St. Mary's, and members of the congregation have been working on how we might improve our welcome and teaching of those coming to us. Stewardship is up in terms of people giving money and their talents. We saw two members of our church get confirmed. Which was a very joyful evening.

Our normal services have been well attended. We welcomed Rebecca Swyer (Diocesan director for Apostolic life) who spoke to us about vocations. Fiona Prentice who shared a Godly play story. Our Team Rector Guy Bridgewater came to preach and we had a sermon series on the Holy Spirit through the bible.

Numbers across Christmas were almost double last year – part of the reason for this might be the excellent contact we made with so many families at a very successful Winter Fair and the attractive leaflets we put through doors for both events.

Easter was a special time as we shared a Passover meal, Good Friday liturgy and a joyful Easter Day. We marked Ash Wednesday with a special service, and Ascension Day and St. Leonard's day we shared food and drink together.

Our New Year bring and share meal was lovely and we also had a Beetle Drive to raise funds for the church – our Monthly Socials also continue.

We have had a number of new members join the church which we marked with a Newcomer's Tea. We have been able to use our building to host a number of events, meetings and charity collections, and when the Bennetts field fun day was cancelled we invited the community in to pray together.

This year we have supported the charity BEATs. Also, FSW, Sussex historic churches Bike ride and Water aid. As well as all the money from our Christmas Fair going to Embrace the Middle East.

Finally, we enjoyed a Quiet Day in the Barn Church in Crawley.

We continue a monthly service at Glen Arun and this year we took children from Heron Way into Glen Arun to sing at Christmas. I continue to enjoy doing assemblies in Heron Way and the occasional bit of class teaching. Home groups are going well with a record number of people joining for the Lent course. One member is now exploring a vocation to ordained ministry.

Members of the church continue to be involved in community projects, particularly with HCT and our hall is used constantly by different groups.

The Hall is used widely and managed by the church.

During the year there have been a number of new ventures. The church has prayed for years for the opportunity to serve local families and to support the vulnerable. There has been a huge answer to prayer.

Firstly Little Leo's- our weekly baby and toddler group. This came about due to the imminent closure of the NCT group and the team which have taken it on have been brilliant.

Secondly we have begun to host Jubylee bakery. This is a group of young adults who have begun their own business due to the difficulty in getting work because of their special needs. I have been to a number of events with the group during the year, and two members of our congregation are now regularly involved with helping.

Other important developments have included the new logo for our church, and our new signage. Also the production of headed notepaper and welcome leaflets. Our website has been improved and we now have a strong presence on Facebook and Twitter, and I hope our consistent branding will help people recognise us.

During the year I asked Margaret Symonds, our lay reader, to do an audit of our Pastoral Ministry. She has done an excellent job, and we had a brilliant pastoral training day with an external facilitator and a great team was pulled together. We are looking forward to developing the prayer life of our church – starting with Morning Prayer from the Iona community led by members of the congregation.

We had a 'Remembering loved ones' service and tea recently, and several people we have taken funerals for came and shared time with us.

Coming up - potentially our biggest event of the year will be our Open Day in the summer which we have already informed our Hall Users about. This is an excellent opportunity for us to express our gospel message of welcome and inclusivity and share our church life with our community.

We also have plans to create a welcome area in the hall, hold a family service and tea – particularly for baptism families, and continue to prayerfully explore the results of the pastoral care audit.

During the year our Team moved from 5 churches to 4. We presented a prayer book to St. Mark's and continue to pray for them in the new parish of Holbrook. We are looking forward to doing more within the new Team set up.

I am extremely grateful to Jill Budd and Sam Clark for their work as wardens as they come to the end of their term, and to all the members of the congregation who faithfully carry out acts of service- many of which are unseen.

It has been a year of growth and blessing, despite some significant challenges in my own and other people's personal lives, which makes us all the more grateful for God's faithfulness and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Natalie Loveless April 2017