



**Papers for the St. Mary's Church
Congregation AGM
15th February 2026**

Also available to read on the church website

www.stmaryshorsham.org.uk

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
ST. MARY'S CHURCH CONGREGATION & COUNCIL**

The AGM will be held in St. Mary's Church on Sunday 15th February 2026
during the 10.00 service

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 16th February 2025
3. Matters arising
4. Review of 2025
 - a) reports (included in paperwork)
 - b) pastoral update
5. Financial report
6. Nominations:

PCC	(2 vacancies) to be elected at the APCM
Deputy Church Wardens	(3 vacancies)
St. Mary's Church Committee	(8 vacancies)
Deanery Synod	(3 vacancies)
7. Chairman's comments

Parish of Horsham

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of St. Mary's Church Congregation Held in St. Mary's Church during the 10am service on 16th February 2025

Present: Reverends Bernard Sinton, Pat Sinton and Scott Canadas along with 259 members of the congregation present in Church and those watching the service via the live stream.

In Lisa's absence the Church Wardens have asked Nigel Stalley to Chair the AGM.

1. **Apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from four members of the congregation.

2. **Minutes of the AGM held on Sunday 4th February 2024.**

Minutes had been circulated in advance. It was agreed that they were a true record of the meeting.

3. There were no matters arising.

4. **Review of 2024.**

a) **Reports.** A few notes to point out in addition to the previously circulated reports –

- Prayer section – apologies for missing out the once-a-month Wednesday Communion Service held at St. Mary's Church.
- Building & Fabric – last' year's Quinquennial Inspection did not bring up any big surprises but did highlight a number of maintenance issues that need to be carried out over the next few years for which there will be costs involved. One main project completed in 2024 was the installation of the kitchenette. The long running saga of the collapsed grave in the churchyard was eventually sorted out and thanks were given to those who spent many hours pursuing the relevant authorities to get the job done. With energy costs rising we have managed to reduce our energy consumption and therefore our carbon footprint.
- Caring for our church family and the wider community – the reports talk about the wide range of work carried out in our church and the community shown by so many of our church family and the expression of God's love they show for others. Thanks to all those who give of their time to visit and support members of our church family and the wider community.
- Youth, Children and Families – In recognition for all the wide ranging activities provided for our children and young people, special thanks were given to Linda Baker, Lee Buck and their teams for all that they do on our behalf.
- Safeguarding – Thanks to all those who have completed and kept their training up to date keeping our Church a safe place to be.
- A big thank you to all the people who have produced such helpful and informative reports and to all who do so much to make St. Mary's Church the loving Christian community that it is.

b) **Pastoral Update.**

Morag Davies gave thanks for the lives of those from our Church family who had died in 2024 and prayed that they may now rest in peace and rise in glory: Elizabeth Ellacot, Michael Senior, Pamela Stainer, Jane Piggott, Lionel Gaitley, Timothy Jackson, Stuart Harrison, Edward Watson, Dick Ansell, Colin Durham, Ivor Cowdrey, Joan Goode, Janis Brockhurst, Wendy Sewell, Margaret Goodwin, Jennifer Slade, David Stirling, Gladys Denman, Betty Ansell, Colin Phillips, and Alwyn Moore.

5. Financial report

Lindsay Dart referred the congregation to his written report but had a few points that he would like to highlight – we will end the financial year with a small surplus in the General Fund; we remain highly dependent on people's Giving which represents about 60% of our income; we made significant use of our Designated and Restricted Funds principally in relation to the church Centre roof, the kitchenette and the repair of the collapsed grave. Looking forward we will need to raise additional funds for the various capital costs which we will incur.

6. Nominations.

Parish Wardens: Cath Hatton, Sue Keegan and Peter Fruin have been nominated and will be put forward for election at the APCM. Thanks were given to Morag Davies who is looking to stand down as Church Warden this year and recognition was given to all she had done over many years.

Deputy Church Wardens: Linda Emery, Paul Goodwin and Judie Finlay have been nominated and are duly elected.

PCC: Morag Davies, Nick O' Riordan and Judie Finlay have been nominated and will be put forward for election at the APCM.

St. Mary's Church Committee: Lindsay Dart, Lucy Sheppard, Louise Stacey, Hennie Sleeman, Liz Wingett, Laura Fletcher, Linda Emery and Alistair Inglis-Taylor have been nominated and are duly elected.

Deanery Synod: Val Burgess and Nigel Stalley are already on the Synod and welcome anyone who might be interested in the other two vacancies.

Special thanks were extended to the three current Church Wardens – Morag, Cath and Peter for all their hard work and for what they have achieved in what has been a somewhat challenging year.

7. Comments from Cath Hatton (Churchwarden)

Cath outlined how blessed we are with our church family, those present in church and those worshipping and praying at home. As a Church family we look after each other, take Ministries out beyond our Church into the community, to people in need in the UK and, where we can, worldwide. We have opportunities to learn, develop and travel on our own personal Christian journey and we give thanks for our wonderful clergy team. We will continue to build on these aspects, welcome everyone who comes through our doors, take our faith into our town and make the most of every opportunity to share our Faith and God's love. We are a wonderful, active and vibrant Church and invite anyone who is interested in knowing more about any aspects of our Church life to have a chat to find out more.

Lisa, as our Vicar, was thanked for her love, vision, guidance, teaching, pastoral care and leadership and is assured of our love, prayers and support in her journey to regain her full health. Our prayers remain also with Peter, our Churchwarden.

There are many people contributing to Church life in so many ways and thanks are extended to each and every one.

The church service continued with the closing hymn and final blessing.

Reports for the year 2025

Almshouse

St. Mary's Almshouse comprises ten, one bedroom flats, provided at a beneficial rate. One flat is occupied by the Resident Warden. The accommodation is split between east and west houses situated on Normandy. The flats cater for the older person of limited means, still wishing and able to lead an independent lifestyle. St. Mary's Almshouse is a separate, registered charity, run by Trustees who are in post by virtue of their office: the vicar and three churchwardens; plus two co-opted Trustees.

This report is an opportunity on behalf of the church family to thank all those who help with the running of St. Mary's Almshouse. Particular thanks to our Resident Warden, Joanne, and wife Gill, who together look after our residents, also carrying out gardening and small maintenance jobs. The care and assistance they give ensures the almshouse looks amazing and runs smoothly. Joanne and Gill are available for our residents, seven days a week.

Victoria Sturdey is our pastoral visitor at the Almshouse. Thank you to Victoria for her regular visits, offering a caring and listening ear. Thank you to Janet & Clive Palmart, our honorary treasurers, who maintain the accounts. The Almshouse accounts are independently examined by Mark Thompson (Kestrel Accounting). Finally, a vote of thanks to our Clerk to the Trustees, Michael Miles.

In view of specialised care needs, one of our residents moved out of west house to Leggyfield Court, a home run by Saxon Weald. We wish her well in her new surroundings.

During the past year, one bathroom has been upgraded to accommodate a walk-in shower in place of the bath. The guest room in east house has been refurbished and redecorated. The tumble dryer and kitchen sink taps were replaced in our residents' laundry room. Normal maintenance continues with a new contractor now servicing our eleven boilers on site. Quarterly inspections of the fire alarm system continue together with annual electrical inspections and annual rainwater equipment clearance work.

The trustees are intending to take the opportunity given by the empty flat in west house to carry out a major project to improve its accommodation in the coming year. The plan is to integrate redundant corridor space into the flat, improving the size and quality of the accommodation.

Steve Benson, Co-opted Trustee

.....

Bellringers

We have rung for the 10am Service every Sunday and we ring for some Evensongs. We have also rung for special occasions and Weddings during the year. Our learners are continuing to improve.

We have two new recruits.

The bells continue to be well maintained by members of the band.

We are hosting Sussex Association of Church Bellringers AGM in May and the Tewkesbury Shield Competition in September

Several of us continue to help out at Rusper and Lower Beeding who without our help would not be able to ring.

On Practice nights we regularly ring Cambridge and Yorkshire Major, Stedman and Grandsire Caters.

We have enjoyed several social events during the year and a Tower Dinner in January

We sent a donation of £77 to Cancer Research instead of sending Christmas Cards.

This will be my last report as Tower Captain as I am standing down in March.

My thanks must go to the Committee and the rest of the band for all their support.

Val Burgess Tower Captain

Buildings and Fabric

1. This report covers the outcomes and plans for St Mary's Church and the Church Centre.
Team composition: Mike Watson (Premises Manager from mid-February 2025), and 5 volunteers: Paul Goodwin, Reg Haydon, Nick O'Riordan(chair), Nigel Stalley, and Bob Whittaker. The team meets at 2 to 3 monthly intervals at which tasks are assigned appropriately and progressed. To assist with coordination, Laura Fletcher, Cath Hatton and Peter Fruin have also attended Fabric team meetings.
Normal maintenance activities have been carried out by the team and term contractors throughout the year largely without incident and only exceptional items are reported below.
2. **St Mary's Church (QI architect Simon Dyson, next report due April 2029)**
 - 2.1 Church Fabric
The Quinquennial inspection report was delivered in June 2024. Highest priority items revolved around gutter cleaning and maintenance; mortar erosion continues in several places. Deterioration of the Horsham stone roof of the church, in the form of continual spalling and erosion of mortar, continues.
We have implemented a twice yearly gutter-clearing contract with Sussex Shine, for both St Mary's and St Leonard's churches.
We discovered severe rusting and leakage in the central heating pipework near the tower area and in August 2025 BSW replaced short lengths of piping: all now appears to be functioning well.
 - 2.2 Heating controls
In late 2023 we obtained a grant from HDC's Climate Change Fund for the installation of Nest learning thermostats across all buildings in the Parish. Installation of these thermostats has continued through 2025, producing benefits summarised in Section 6 below.
 - 2.3 Churchyard
Again through the Eco Church/Caring for God's Acre initiatives, we continue to meet with Horsham District Council (HDC) staff to improve enjoyment and use of the accessible spaces to the west of the churchyard area and to improve biodiversity. We worked with Horsham Green Gym who helped to clear some of the invasive laurel and bamboo.
WSCC has been repeatedly contacted to repair the paving around the church; temporary mortar-based repairs were undertaken in the autumn and we anticipate more permanent repair in 2026.

3. Church Centre (QI architect Robin Nugent, next report due January 2026)

3.1 QI architect Robin Nugent

We sadly report that Robin died unexpectedly in August 2025. A respected Conservation Architect with a local practice near Sedgewick Castle, Robin's work at the Church Centre in 2021 will be remembered for its sensitivity, appropriateness, economy and practical improvement of a complex set of spaces that has provided a springboard for the future.

3.2 Change of Use

A small but still significant part of the motivation for the improvements to the Church Centre made in 2021 was to enable the St Mary's Pre-School to use the Manor Room weekdays and the Barn on three weekdays, termly. The process of obtaining Change of Use, necessitated by evolving planning legislation, took several years but eventually approval was gained in early September 2025. St Mary's Pre-School is planning to re-open in the Church Centre at the beginning of September 2026. Refurbishment of the Manor Room and the exterior area is planned for early 2026.

3.3 Sound Transmission

Working with our party-wall neighbours at 31 Causeway, we successfully installed a trial acoustic panel in 2022. To fully discharge the planning conditions for the Change of Use, we obtained Listed Building Consent in November 2025 for the installation of permanent soundproofing by UK Soundproofing Ltd. The work will take place in early 2026 with the welcome agreement of our neighbours.

3.4 Barn room heating

The antiquated Ferroli gas boiler and Worcester instantaneous water heater were replaced in August by a 3 phase electrical supply serving a new 30 kW electric boiler in the kitchen. Despite some initial teething problems, the new boiler and old circulation system is bedding in well and will improve predictability of the heating of the Foyer and Barn areas, to the benefit of users.

4. Energy use and carbon footprint

In 2021 the PCC endorsed the General Synod's aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A particular challenge has been that the Parish has eight fossil fuel-based heating systems across its five buildings, of which only one can be considered modern and efficient. Through the year all of our heating systems have required repair and careful attention, against a backdrop of changes to Faculty rules in mid 2022 that no longer permit a straightforward like-for-like replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems.

We renegotiated our electricity and gas supplies to a single supplier, Smartest Energy again in September. Unit rates have fallen in line with market forces since last year and the cost of energy appears to have stabilised.

We have taken on board the Net Zero Action Plan that the Diocese published in 2024 and continue to drive downwards our carbon footprint. We have been assessed to be one of the highest emitting parishes in the Diocese, partly due to the relatively high level of occupancy of some of our buildings. We qualified for a free energy audit of both St Mary's Church and Church Centre which was received from Inspired Efficiency (energy auditors) in September: their report is being evaluated. We are a leading participant in the Net Zero Community of Practice, managed by Steve Collins for Portsmouth, Chichester and Guildford Dioceses.

The table below shows our recorded energy consumption since 2019, together with the associated carbon footprint:

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
St Mary's Church	Gas (kWh)	262000 (95600 in Q4)	122000	168000	180000	196100 (69500 in Q4)	164300	184964
	Electricity (kWh)	16800	10500	10200	13000	13500	13000	12855
Church	Gas (kWh)	100000	59000	50000	91200	59200	67900	54599

Centre								
	Electricity (kWh)	10500	7500	7600	9200	8700	8800	26198
	Total Carbon footprint	73 tonnes	37.5 tonnes	44.5 tonnes	55.3 tonnes	52.3 tonnes	47.9 tonnes	49.3 tonnes

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Holy Trinity Church	Gas (kWh)	40500	34700	39200	35000	50100	52700	59413
	Electricity (kWh)	5500	4310	4800	4400	4700	5100	4855
Church Hall	Gas (kWh)	2300	4300	1000	1125	3742	2300	2033
	Electricity (kWh)	8100	5600	6400	7500	6500	5900	5163
	Total Carbon footprint	11 tonnes	9.5 tonnes	10 tonnes	9.3 tonnes	12.3 tonnes	12.1 tonnes	12.6 tonnes

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
St Leonard's Church	Gas (kWh)	30000	53000	28500	35000	38500	30100	37956
	Electricity (kWh)	10000	2900	3800	5025	4400	4600	4174
	Total Carbon footprint	8 tonnes	10.5 tonnes	6.5 tonnes	8.1 tonnes	8.6 tonnes	7.0 tonnes	7.5 tonnes

With increased venue hire in all three churches, there is a slight increase in energy use in 2025 that is almost balanced by the 14% decrease in UK carbon footprint conversion factors due to the increase in non-fossil fuel energy generation. In aggregate our carbon energy footprint has reduced over the past 6 years by nearly 30%, from 92 tonnes in 2019 to 69 tonnes in 2025.

Through better, more mindful use of environmental controls and investment in more efficient heating and lighting systems, our aim is to reduce our carbon footprint to well below 2019 levels whilst increasing the level of use of our buildings.

The Fabric team is committed to drawing up a plan for the logical phasing out of as many of our fossil-fuel heating systems as possible over the next five years.

Nick O’Riordan

.....

Caring

We are so blessed to have such a marvellous team of dedicated visitors who carry out their duties so faithfully. In November we met as a parish team to have a lunch together as a way of appreciation for all they do. It was a good opportunity to share experiences and to talk about possibilities of finding out if there was more we could do.

The St. Mary’s team has about 25 members and we would love to welcome anyone who would like to do visiting, especially if you might be involved with younger families. Training will be given and DBS checks are required. Please contact me if you would like to know more about this ministry.

There are members of the team, who are also lay ministers of Communion who will take Communion to the housebound and nursing homes. Morag is on the Chaplaincy team at Horsham Hospital and takes Communion to patients that request it.

Prayer Ministry is available in the side chapel at the 10am Sunday Service.

The prayer chain is an effective and efficient way of holding up prayer in the event of illness, surgery,

bereavement that has fallen on members of our church family. The message is started by Morag Davies and it gets round the parish in a very short space of time.

Stepping Stones is the bereavement support coffee morning held in the Leslie Room on the first Thursday of the month. It is a small friendly group for anyone looking for company and support. Several trained facilitators are on hand to listen and share coffee.

December 22nd St. Mary's choir visited Horizon Ward, for the second year, to sing Carols for the patients and staff. Two members of the hospital staff accompanied them with their musical instruments. The hospital staff really appreciate these visits, there are always tears as the patients remember the favourite carols from their childhood, it is such an emotional time. A huge thank you to the choir for giving up their afternoon.

Morag Davies
Pastoral Care-Coordinator

Care Homes

Various members of St Mary's Pastoral team continued to offer Services, including Holy Communion, in several Horsham Care Homes/Residential Homes as well as offering personal 1:1 visits throughout 2025. The homes were visited before Christmas with some having a more informal service using the Bethlehem Carol sheets so the residents could request their favourite Christmas carols. The offer in Care Homes appears to be much appreciated by both staff & residents.

Linda liaises with the Care Home leads across the Team Parish intermittently & updates a table demonstrating which homes are visited by both St Mary's & other churches in Horsham.

Linda Goodwin

Children & Families

Sunday Club

Sunday Club is thriving with numbers averaging around 20 children each Sunday morning. We welcome pre-school families to join us which means a wide age range from toddlers to Year 5. A parent/carer must stay with pre-school children for safeguarding reasons and to enable the leader to teach. Younger children enjoy watching the older ones dress up and act out stories joining in with appropriate games and craft activities and learning together.

Throughout the year we have continued our journey through the Old Testament using TrueWay Kids resources and God's inspiration to us. Having finished the OT we will now begin the New Testament telling the story of Jesus having just celebrated his birth.

Thanks to Liz Lobb, Louise, Kulod, Dana and Abigail Fogg who form the support team.

South Aisle holiday crafts

Using the South Aisle for informal crafts during school holidays has been a great success. This enables families to interact with their children and still be part of the service or attend the service knowing their children are happily engaged nearby. Another benefit is that the wider church family can enjoy seeing our children being creative and well behaved.

Creche

This is well used during services by families with very young children. Thanks to Sue West for keeping the space tidy & supplied with colouring materials and toys.

Fused

Children and young people have met together during the 10am service usually once a term. These are fun worship sessions which help everyone to get to know each other better and grow in faith.

Informal Children's Service – 3.30pm

These have continued on the first Sunday of the month in 2025. However, the community of regular families who attend now come to Sunday Club and other activities. We have therefore decided that the service is now longer appropriate and will not continue at the moment. It requires significant input and support and as families now feel comfortable attending Sunday morning services our resources would be better placed elsewhere. This is testament to the warm welcome young families now receive thanks to welcomers and the church family in general. Thanks to Michael Miles & Joyce Brown, Jenny Holden, Karen Ind and Anne Hossack for their support.

First Holy Communion

Four short sessions were held after church in the spring preparing children to begin taking Holy Communion. Nine children were then welcomed to join the church family in taking communion at celebration services in June.

Little Footprints

Though the group has thrived in numbers this year and some parents/carers have been very helpful, the safer recruiting requirements have made it difficult to get together a rota of people to run the group. No church volunteers have been available to help with refreshments (apart from Lai occasionally). Mike (Premises Manager) has been invaluable in helping set up and clear away.

It has been more than challenging to open up, welcome at the desk, buy, make and serve refreshments, lead song time and supervise the room properly single handed as well as helping set up and clear away. As I am leaving, Little Footprints has closed for the moment.

However a group of regular members is very keen to keep Little Footprints going. Hopefully it will be possible in the future that the group can run again with parents/carers/childminders leading.

Open the Book

The team have continued to enjoy presenting bible stories at assembly in St Mary's School much helped by Emma and her team. Delysia runs the group with her usual creative energy and flair. However the group will probably finish their ministry in July 2026 as everyone is getting older and we have lost several members this year.

Church Team Assemblies at St Mary's School

Alternating with Open the Book the Church Team have presented assemblies which follow on from the Open the Book story the previous week. The aim is to look more in depth at the theme, focusing on the older children but involving the whole school as much as possible.

School Services

We welcome both St Mary's Pre-school & St Mary's School for regular services in church throughout the year.

School, Beavers & Cubs Visits to church

Many schools and other children's groups have visited the church over the year especially in the summer term and Christmas periods. Autumn 2025 saw a large number of uniformed organisations enjoying a visit to the bell tower, a church tour and time doing quizzes. Thanks to Val and her volunteers for making these visits so enjoyable for the children who also love exploring the church, seeing its nooks and crannies, learning about faith and history in tours led by myself. One group were invited to try the organ by Mike, which was another highlight.

Holy Trinity Schools Visits

Links with Arunside, Trafalgar and Greenway Schools have continued to flourish with schools being welcomed to Holy Trinity and St Mary's, especially during Easter and Advent. Sam and I have visited schools to talk with children about Christianity using props and costumes (from OtB) to illustrate stories from the life of Jesus.

Good Friday Family Activity Morning

We were pleased to have St Mary's church full of families crafting, gardening, praying, singing & taking part in the Easter Egg Hunt. We also held an Easter Egg Hunt after the 10a.m. Easter Sunday service.

Christmas Nativity Service

Both services were full of families enjoying the nativity play, craft, carols and candles at our Christmas Eve nativity services. It was wonderful to have Lisa back with us and Sarah taking part for the first time.

Church Family Picnic at Holy Trinity

This summer we held our social at Holy Trinity. We had a few children attending who enjoyed teenagers playing games with them.

Our interns were especially helpful during this and other events during the year thank you Erin and Izzy.

2025 was my last year as Children's Worker and I am happy to hand over the ministry to Sarah. I send every blessing to her, the wardens, church team and volunteers who have supported me and the families who bless us with their presence.

Thank you

Linda Baker

.....

Choir

St. Mary's Choir is an integral part of the church and provides a valuable leadership with regards to all aspects of music within the service. As Director of Music it is my job to provide and lead the music in the

church. I do this to the best of my ability but it is all the members of the choir that help me fulfill that requirement and I thank them for their continued support and enthusiasm. As a Parish church we are very lucky to have a good sized choir (at present nearly 40, 5 new members this year) and produce music of the calibre we do! The Junior Choir of about 10 members is also key part of the church and sings every second Sunday.

2024 / 25 has been a busy year and productive year for the choir. At Christmas time we provided the music for three carol services, the Advent, Nine Lessons and Carols and the Epiphany Carol Service. Plus our usual choral evensongs and special services and concerts (Stainer's Crucifixion on Good Friday was a special concert!).

The choir trips we have had to Cathedrals has been a highlight of mine and it is always nice to sing and perform in different environments. It is also a great opportunity for us to 'bond' as a choir and it is great to finish the year on a high! It is always hard work organising these trips, and I would like to thank Steve and Jo Benson who have been the main people in arranging the accommodation.

We are looking forward to our next Cathedral visit for 2026 where we will be singing the services at Worcester Cathedral for the week of 26th – 30th August. We will also be singing the weekend services in Chichester Cathedral on the weekend of the 1st / 2nd August (everyone is welcome to come and hear us sing!)

The choir would not run effectively without other key members and I would like to take this opportunity in thanking the following people:-

Mike Overend, our Assistant Organist continues to provide support in all areas and without his excellent skills the choir wouldn't be able to provide some of the performances we do!

In Sept 2025 we appointed an Organ Scholar to the music team, Oisín Lane, 16, a very talented young man, who I am sure will go on to great things in the future.

I would also like to pay tribute to Valarie Lintott who has helped me in training some of the choristers, it has been greatly appreciated by me and the choristers themselves! A big thank you to all the ladies (and gents) who kindly feed us before choral evensongs and important occasions. Jenny Watts for keeping our robes up to date and of the right length as well as organising the music we sing. To our Ex -Chairman, Steve Benson and to our new Chairman, Andy Wolstenholme and of course to all our choir committee.

The choir does a fantastic job and the standard of singing remains very high. As a Parish Choir we offer an amazing variety of music in our worship and I am looking forward to continuing this for the remainder of 2026

Jeremy Weaver
Director of Music

Deepening

Homegroups:

- Homegroups are small groups of people from church who meet regularly at the home of a host. Homegroups tend to follow a course, which might be around a contemporary faith issue, or around a particular Bible study - and have plenty of time for discussion and prayer. The groups are mostly quite informal and allow members to build strong relationships in a caring safe environment and to support each other.
- Over the last year we have had 6 groups in operation for St. Mary's congregation – with around 56 people attending these groups. 3 groups meet during the daytime and 3 on a Monday evening.

- Anyone who provides their details to welcomers in church is offered further information about home groups in case they would like to learn more and we receive a number of enquiries which are all followed up.
- A new homegroup is being set up – starting January 2026 – with a focus on parents of young children – about 8 people have currently signed up to join this (along with 3 leaders)
- Homegroups determine their own courses of study and over the last year a wide variety of topics have been covered including:
 - Study courses on various books in the Bible including the Psalms, Gospels of St. Mark and St. Matthew, The Bible Series from the Bible Society, Proverbs, the Creeds,
 - Courses around living out our faith in the world such as: ‘Fruitfulness on the Frontline’; and ‘The Difference Course’
 - Courses on aspects of Christian life such as: An Advent Course ‘Coming of the Saviour’, ‘Saints for Healing’, ‘The Lectio Course’ from 24/7 Prayer, ‘Be Still ‘from 24/7 Prayer, “Practising the Way”
 - Books such as: ‘Gently & Lowly’ by Dane Ortland,
- We are currently in a situation where all the groups (except the one which meets on a Wednesday morning in the Leslie room) are full, so it is getting difficult to accommodate new joiners. As a result, we are looking for an individual or group of people who would be prepared to host and run a new group, ideally one mid-week evening.

Lent course:

- In Lent 2024 the Diocesan Lent course was run across the Parish: a reflection on the Nicene creed which explored the core of our faith.
- This Lent, we will again run the Diocesan Lent course which is based upon the Gospel of St. Matthew

Anyone interested in joining a homegroup should email: homegroups@horshamstmarys.org.uk

If you feel able to consider setting up a new home group – please speak with one of the clergy, or you can chat informally about what is involved by contacting Linda Emery (linda.emery@horshamstmarys.org.uk)

Linda Emery

.....

Eco Church

Team members: Sarah Harrison, Becky Hawkins, Liz Hawkins, Richard Herrington, Chris O’Riordan, Nick O’Riordan, Gill Parsonson, Piers Pollard, Ros Pollard, Katherine Potter, Hennie Sleeman.

Eco activities in 2025

Spring Talks

The Team arranged another two talks in the spring, both well attended and sparking plenty of interest.

David Bridges from the Wild about Warnham project spoke about the work the Warnham community is doing to support its local swift population and reverse declining numbers. He returned during the breeding season to survey St Mary’s tower, which has been a nesting site in the past. Sadly he found no evidence that we still host swifts.

Michael Fogg from our congregation gave a talk about the dilemmas we face around food production and diet in the context of climate change and carbon emissions, and the powerful

benefits of plant-based eating. Encouraged by Michael's talk, plant-based milk is now offered during Sunday morning refreshments. (Please ask if you don't see it on the table)

Flower Festival

The flower festival in St Mary's, involving arrangers from across the Parish, was the first to eliminate as far as possible the use of non-biodegradable floral foam / oasis in arrangements. Instead coir bags made locally and developed by Nigel and Carol Stalley, or sphagnum moss were chosen by most. The festival was again very successful, with the beautiful displays widely admired by the many visitors to St Mary's during a very hot week. There were some challenges but much useful learning for next time about which flowers coped best in the more sustainable media under these conditions, and which water containers were most successful.

Fairtrade

In September St Mary's regained accreditation as a Fairtrade Place of Worship, indicating that we commit to buying Fairtrade coffee, sugar and tea wherever possible across all our hospitality activities. We also again supported the Horsham Fairtrade Christmas Fair at the end of November, with several members of the Eco Church Team involved on the day.

Churchyard

We and the Gardening Team continue work in the churchyard. Efforts to establish links with our mowing contractors have proved unsuccessful, so for now we are reliant on somewhat unpredictable grass cutting days. We are trying to collect and compost the grass clippings to improve biodiversity and the environment for wildflowers.

A walking trail created by Horsham Green Spaces in the summer passes through St Mary's Churchyard. The trail guide includes prompts to look out for our ancient oak and the variety of lichens and mosses on our gravestones.

St Mary's School are now using part of the churchyard for their weekly Forest School sessions, which the children are really enjoying. Mike Watson our Premises Manager has built them a bug house which the children are enjoying filling with suitable hibernation / hiding materials.

In December volunteers from Horsham Green Gym kindly spent a very wet morning alongside some Gardening Team members clearing clumps of bamboo, with back up from Horsham District Council to clear the debris.

Many thanks to Katherine Potter for her support, and leadership of the Gardening Team.

Diocesan involvement

Chris, Nick, Gill and Hennie represented the Parish at the first Diocesan Net Zero Carbon conference in January in Portsmouth Cathedral. Chris and Hennie are members of the Parish Environmental Support Network (PESN), coordinated by the Diocesan Environmental Officer. This meets bimonthly to share information and enable churches to support each other towards their Eco Church goals. There have been especially useful sessions on churchyard land management and with the Christian organisation Climate Stewards on measuring, reducing and offsetting church carbon footprints. Nick continues to link in with Diocesan resources and groups to support the on-going work of the Fabric Team.

Carbon Literacy Training

Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) enables understanding of the carbon cost of everyday things and activities and enables us to do something to reduce our carbon footprint on an individual, community and organisational basis. Cath Hatton and Hennie completed the training in December and would highly recommend the course, which is open to all church communities and members.

New members of the Team are always welcome, especially those with an interest in the Net Zero Carbon agenda or who are keen to be involved in the churchyard work.

Hennie Sleeman

.....

English Lessons for Asylum Seekers and Ukrainians

We've had a busy and successful year providing English Lessons and care support for our Asylum Seekers and Ukrainian refugees. Here is some data which helps to describe our activities this year.

Statistics for 2025	Number
Asylum Seekers English Lessons average attendance	25
Ukrainian Beginners English Lessons average attendance:	6
Ukrainian Intermediate English Lessons average attendance:	5
Number of Refugees provided with remote English Lessons over zoom:	2
Number of volunteers helping to deliver English lessons:	22

Our English Lessons at Cisswood comprises separate groups for Beginners, Intermediates, Children and a Crèche. We continue to encounter a steady stream of new arrivals from many different countries but with larger numbers from Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia. While getting to know our Asylum Seekers we become aware of many stories of sufferings – we are humbled by their fortitude and remember them in our prayers.

Over the year we have helped 3 families with moving into accommodation in Crawley and Horsham (the Domingos family, Maryam Khazaei and Nana Ipan) and helped with supplying needed items such as cleaning equipment and furniture and with assembling their beds and tables.

During the year we have put on several events: a service at St Mary's in February to mark the anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a trip to the Bishop's Palace in Chichester in July for 5 of our Asylum Seekers, a trip to Nymans Gardens in August for 50 Asylum Seekers with their children and an end of year Christmas Party at Cisswood when we celebrated with Father Christmas giving out 30 gift bags for adults and 28 toys for children – all of which were kindly donated by St Mary's via the Christmas Tree tag appeal. The Ukrainian Groups also celebrated Christmas with end of term meals.

We were especially privileged this year to support Maryam Khazaei (a refugee from Iran) being baptized at St Mary's in October – a special and moving event.

We are thankful to all at St Mary's for the generous support of our mission and look forward to encouraging and helping those in need in the coming year.

Sue Keegan and David Mowl

Flower arrangers

I would like to thank the small group of flower arrangers who every week arrange, water and look after the flowers in our Church.

We now have only 5 people on our rota and we desperately need more if we are going to continue to look after the flowers every week.

We are gradually stopping the use of Oasis in our flower arrangements and we are attempting to buy locally grown flowers

We would welcome anyone who would like to join our group no experience necessary.

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH ME IF YOU FEEL YOU CAN HELP

Val Burgess

Health and Safety

Accidents/Incidents

Our accident reporting system has recorded a total of 6 accidents that occurred during the year, all of which were subject to a completed accident report form. These accidents have been investigated and, where appropriate, changes have been made.

Injuries sustained were in 5 cases minor, requiring first aid only. However, one case was of a serious nature when an elderly visitor to the church was knocked off his feet by the swinging of one of the north doors causing him to sustain a nasty head injury. He received first aid from the duty Church Welcomers but was transported to hospital via an ambulance and kept in overnight for observation.

As a consequence of this incident, a project is underway to modify the two heavy oak doors in the north entrance and in the meantime, doors are held open by sides people at services and one oak door is always pinned open when the church is open to visitors.

Dogs brought into St Mary's Church

A formal policy relating to dogs brought into services and when visiting the church has been formulated and signed off by St Mary's Church Committee and the PCC. The policy has established basic ground rules to ensure that dogs brought into church do not pose any health and safety risks.

A one-page A5 flier has been produced which is given to all who bring dogs into the church. The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored, and changes may be made in the light of experience.

Risk Assessments

This year, the PCC formally endorsed multiple risk assessments for offsite activities. These relate to offsite activities undertaken by the Youth and Refugee Groups. Risk assessments were also approved for children's and family events.

Paving Slabs outside St Mary's north doors

For the past two years (since 1st Dec 2023) we have been lobbying West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to properly repair the paving slabs that form the path around the north door and the footpath that passes down through the churchyard which is used by many people as they walk to St Mary's school and beyond.

Action from WSCC, who are responsible for the pathway (not Horsham District Council), has been lamentably slow and ineffective, so we have raised the matter with our WSCC councillor for the Riverside Division, Louise Potter. She has undertaken to chase the WSCC department concerned and report back to us.

.....

Mission Partners and Giving 2025

Lent

Our successful Lent Lunches raised £818.40 for **Friends of Children in Romania**. Thanks to Sarah Dart for organising the different teams of volunteers each week and thanks also to all those who helped out cooking soup, preparing the food, serving and clearing away afterwards.

June Focus

In June we had a display up in Church to raise awareness of the work of **Horsham Matters**. We donated £585.00 to Horsham Matters, which was 10% of the money raised during the Flower Festival.

Harvest

Our Harvest gifts (food and money) went to **Family Support Work (FSW)**. This year we organised a Family Harvest Brunch for the first time. Thank you to Martin Dexter and Jay Pearson for all the cooking and food preparation. Hennie Sleeman spoke about the work of FSW at the Brunch and in total we raised £307.00. Thank you to all who donated and supported the event.

Christmas

Our Christmas appeal, which raised money from collections taken at our main Christmas services, raised £2,088.91 This money was given to **St. Catherine's Hospice** in Crawley.

On-going

Donations to Horsham District food bank have continued whenever the church building has been open; thanks are owed to Anne Banner, who has collected and taken them to Horsham Matters. Donations continue to be collected in a box located by the North door of the church.

We continued to support:

- **Rob and Helen Quail** who work with Engineering Ministries International (EMI) out in Nicaragua. We gave Rob and Helen a £1,000 donation towards their work.
- **Becky Hunsberger** who works with Teach Beyond. We gave Becky a donation of £1,000.

Mission Partners for 2026

In August and September 2025 our church family were invited to make suggestions for Mission Partners in 2026. These suggestions were reviewed by Judie Finlay, Hennie Sleeman and Nigel Stalley who then made a proposal to the Church Committee. In January 2026 the St. Mary's Church Committee approved the following Mission Partners for 2026.

- Lent Lunches – Phoenix Stroke Club (Local)
- Focus in June – Horsham Matters (Local)
- Harvest gifts – Salvation Army and Harvest donations – Anchor Counselling (Local)
- Christmas Appeal – CentrePoint (National)
- Directly budgeted donations of £1,000 to
 - o Rob and Helen Quail (Engineering Ministries International) (International)
 - o Becky Hunsberger (Teach Beyond) (International)

Details about our Mission Partners can be found in the 2026 Mission Partners booklet which is currently being produced by Judie Finlay. It will be available in Church in due course. The notice board at the back of Church is regularly updated and gives details of the Mission Partners we are currently supporting.

Nigel Stalley

.....

Pre-school

The most exciting news for the pre-school this year has been the agreement of the 'change of use' application for the Barn which means that we can at last move the pre-school in September 2026. We are hugely grateful to Nick O'Riordan for his persistent hard work in making this happen. Janet Palmart is chairing the committee which is organising the move.

By the end of the summer term 2025, we had 42 children cared for by 14 staff. We were able to care and support a number of children with additional needs and provide places for 2 children from Cisswood House. At the end of the academic year, 25 of our children went on to 8 different local schools and 2 children moved to Horsham Nursery School. We are all very sad that a suitable school place has still not been found for a child with additional need for whom we provided an extra year of care.

One member of staff has moved away but we have had another past member of staff return to us on a temporary basis. Bethany has completed her SENCO qualification and Stacey is well on the way to achieving Early Years Teacher Status. We regularly provide work experience to students from local schools.

The number of children for the Autumn Term was 33 as at 31st December 2025, with 7 more children joining us in January. We still have a number of sessions available which we hope to fill in the coming term.

Horsham District Council has now given us an official licence for using their land for our forest school sessions. We ran a family forest fun afternoon in the Autumn term so that parents, uncles, aunts and grandparents could experience what we do alongside their children. We made toffee apples, played on rope bridges, made pine cone 'fireworks' and learnt some woodwork skills to make mallets.

Other highlights have been visits to St. Mary's School to see the fire engine and police, giant teamwork construction, lots of woodwork and learning about the 7 continents.

Our intergenerational meet-ups remain popular with both staff and children and we particularly enjoy the challenges at the end of the session where the children and older people work together to, for example, get as many balls of paper from one end of the room to the other by pouring them over their heads to the person behind!

In Lisa's absence, some of our services have been led by Linda and Scott. Lee also stepped in on a number of occasions and although this is not his usual age group, the services he led went down very well with the children!

We continue to be a pre-school which aims to care for the whole family, seeking to support parents as well as the children. We have, for example, been able to support parents with children with additional needs in completing lengthy forms in order to obtain support and, also, have supported families who were in financial need. We work hard to get to know our families really well and are able to connect them with agencies which can provide specialised support and, of course, we are also able to promote Church services, groups and events to our families.

Karen Taylor

.....

Safeguarding

The Parish-wide safeguarding team consists of myself (Parish Safeguarding Officer), Jude Wolstenholme (St Mary's Safeguarding Officer), Clare Schofield (Holy Trinity Safeguarding Officer) and Katherine Potter (Safeguarding Training Officer). The team met regularly over the last year to support each other, share good working practices, update on information received from the Diocese and discuss operational issues. The PSO continues to attend parochial church council (PCC) meetings, and the Safeguarding Officers attend their respective church committee meetings.

The team continue to support volunteers to undertake the training relevant to their roles and to ensure that safer recruitment guidance is followed. There is a continued focus across the Diocese on raising our awareness and understanding of domestic abuse, and in January, we ran our first in-person training session. This was attended by twenty volunteers from across the Parish, and the team received a substantial amount of positive feedback on the content and presentation of the course, which was encouraging. We will be running additional in-person safeguarding training throughout the year.

2025 saw the introduction of the Safeguarding Dashboard, an interactive, online tool to enable parishes to monitor their compliance with safeguarding policies and training. The dashboard helps evidence our good practice, identifies outstanding tasks and provides an action plan that is reviewed at every PCC meeting. It simplifies safeguarding administration, provides links to national Church of England guidance and templates, supports governance and evidences our ongoing commitment to robust safeguarding.

The safeguarding team retain a close working relationship with the Clergy, Pastoral teams, Church Wardens, Staff and congregations. We work to promote and support a healthy safeguarding culture across the parish, and my thanks go to the entire team.

Elizabeth Lobb

Servers

The serving team provides servers for all the main morning 10am Sunday services and additional services as required. We have welcomed two new young team members during the last year, but also said goodbye to one server who stepped down to go to University, and the server team supporting the 10am service now has eleven members.

The team remains very dedicated and it is through their support, enthusiastic hard work and commitment that we can help support St Mary's worship. We continue to look for new members.

The 8am service continues to be supported separately by Clive Palmart, Simon and Victoria.

Chris Button

Sidespeople for 2025

Simon Bannister
Sarah Brough
Michael Frater
Linda Goodwin
Denise Herrington
Delysia Hill
Margaret Hope
Joanne Kinsley-Smith
Linda McLean
Maureen Muggleton
Nigel Patey
Alex Spence-Holey
Nigel Stalley
Pauline Welch
Jude Wolstenholme

Christopher Brough
Paul Clarke
Morag Gates
Liz Hawkins
Richard Herrington
Jenny Holden
Richard Hope
Liz Lickiss
Jacqui McGuinness
Denise Patey
Hennie Sleeman
Carol Stalley
Sue Watts
Sue West

Treasurer's Report

The 2025 year-end accounts are still being finalised, but I have set out below some financial highlights relating to St Mary's.

- We expect to have a General Fund surplus for the year of circa £17,000, which was better than our budget and compares with an equivalent surplus of £5,000 in 2024.
 - We remain heavily dependent on the generosity of our regular givers, with stewardship (and the related Gift Aid) of £202,000 representing over two thirds of our income in the year; this was 6% higher than in 2024.
 - Fees for weddings and funerals of £8,000 were 15% lower than 2024, with five weddings and 38 funerals or memorial events (compared with 16 and 30 respectively in 2024).
 - Hall, Church and car park lettings of £94,000 remain important sources of income and were 14% higher than in 2024.
 - We continue to benefit from the generous financial support of a small number of donors for our Youth Work, as well as a contribution from St John's, Broadbridge Heath.
 - Our costs, including Worship, Mission, Administration, Church and Hall running and maintenance costs and Children and Youth work, were £191,000, 6% higher than in 2024 principally due to increased energy costs.
 - We fully met the Deanery contribution target for our Parish Share of £90,000, which was 4% above the amount to cover the Parish Mission Costs (the costs of our Clergy stipends, pension, housing) and the wider mission of the Diocese).
- With respect to our Designated and Restricted Funds, we spent £22,000 on the new boiler at the Church Centre and £7,000 repairing a heating pipe in the Church. In addition to £5,000 donated during the year, we benefitted from a share of the legacy from the estate of the late Rev Derek Tansill of £35,700 which was also allocated to the Fabric Fund. In response to the appeal to raise funds for the refurbishment of the Organ we had raised approximately £40,000 of the fundraising target of £150,000.
- Looking forward to 2026, we have budgeted at break even on the General Fund. We will have to continue to monitor closely all costs during the year.

Lindsay Dart, St Mary's Treasurer

.....

Welcomers (mid-week)

Our team is currently around 30, with many fulfilling regular slots each week and some doing a very helpful two or three each month. More are always needed to fill gaps and relieve regulars.

We have 'welcomed' several new welcomers this year: Stan Ball, Trudy Williamson, John Pearce, Rachel Goodall, Jean Bateson, Louis Rayner and Sarah Harrison. And said farewell to a few such as Tim and Anne Hossack. A few other helpers are currently not able to help due to illness/injury or winter weather.

We have, by and large, managed to keep the church open between 10-1 on Monday to Saturday every week, with a few occasions each month when we have needed to close for part of the morning due to lack of helpers or illness at short notice.

There have been a few issues this last year which the leadership team are aware of and are being mitigated:

The heavy wooden front doors have been the cause of a few accidents, at least one very serious. We now have been advised to leave one open which must be creating havoc with the heating bill.

There have also been one or two concerning incidents which now means that we insist on having a minimum of two welcomers on duty at each time slot. This has made filling the rota more difficult.

I am very grateful to all the team for their continuing support.

Katherine Potter

.....

Youth Work

In the year of 2025, we have seen a large amount of growth in our youth work from both across the Parish and at St. Mary's. We have been blessed by growth. Not only have we seen increase in numbers but also in new services and groups. We have seen our youth take a step forward in their faith, we have witnessed, them praying for one another, receive words from God, lead worship, deliver sermons and lead our younger people in small discussions. This year we took 33 young people to May Camp (30 in 2024), 13 to Satellites (7 in 2024) and 31 young people on the October retreat (20 in 2024). All of these events have allowed young people to explore, strengthen and display their faith.

At St. Mary's:

We have continued to grow in our Sunday services. We are beginning to see a regular group attend the Core on Sunday mornings. They come together to build community and look at the Bible. We have also started a new informal service on the 3rd Sunday at St. Mary's. The aim of this service has been to bring the youth together in an all-age modern style worship, with a focus on our youth. Many young people have been attending the service led by Lisa, who has offered a space to reflect, question and be together in community.

Across the wider Parish:

We have been regularly in Millais, Tanbridge House and now in Forest secondary schools. In Forest we have started a new Christian club offering a chance for young people from across the school to come together in faith and explore the bible. Our Café Connect service held once a month at Holy Trinity Church has become more youth led. On average about 17 young people attend the service where we worship, pray and discuss Christianity in a productive way. Our open-door youth group (TGI) has also started to have a Christian message delivered by Scott, to those who want to hear more about Christianity. This has continued to be a staple of our outreach into the community. We finished another Bronze Duke of Edinburgh in 2025, with 14 young people participating and completing the award.

We have had 2 super interns with us for most of 2025. One left us to go off to university in August where she has found a CU to join. Our other intern has supported the youth at May Camp, Satellites and the October retreat. While in her post she has successfully run a quiz night to raise money for the camps/retreats. She been able to come alongside our youth and helped Bible studies at Café Connect and the Core.

We had a small group of older youth attend our young leaders' program. Teaching them how to behave, be a leader and offering them an opportunity to take the lead in our groups. Equipping our

young people to become leaders with a Christian viewpoint and leading with love, is so important. We have continued to run a year 6 group looking at faith and we finished the Youth Alpha course. In 2026 we are looking to continue to encounter God in a different way.

The one word that has sat with me the whole year is 'blessed'. What a blessing our youth are to us and God. What a blessing I am in to be able to put things on for our youth. What a blessing to have a God that loves us more than we could fathom. What a blessing I have, to engage, encounter and journey with our young people as they come to love and know the Lord.

Matthew 5:7 you're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full' you find yourselves cared for.

Lee Buck
