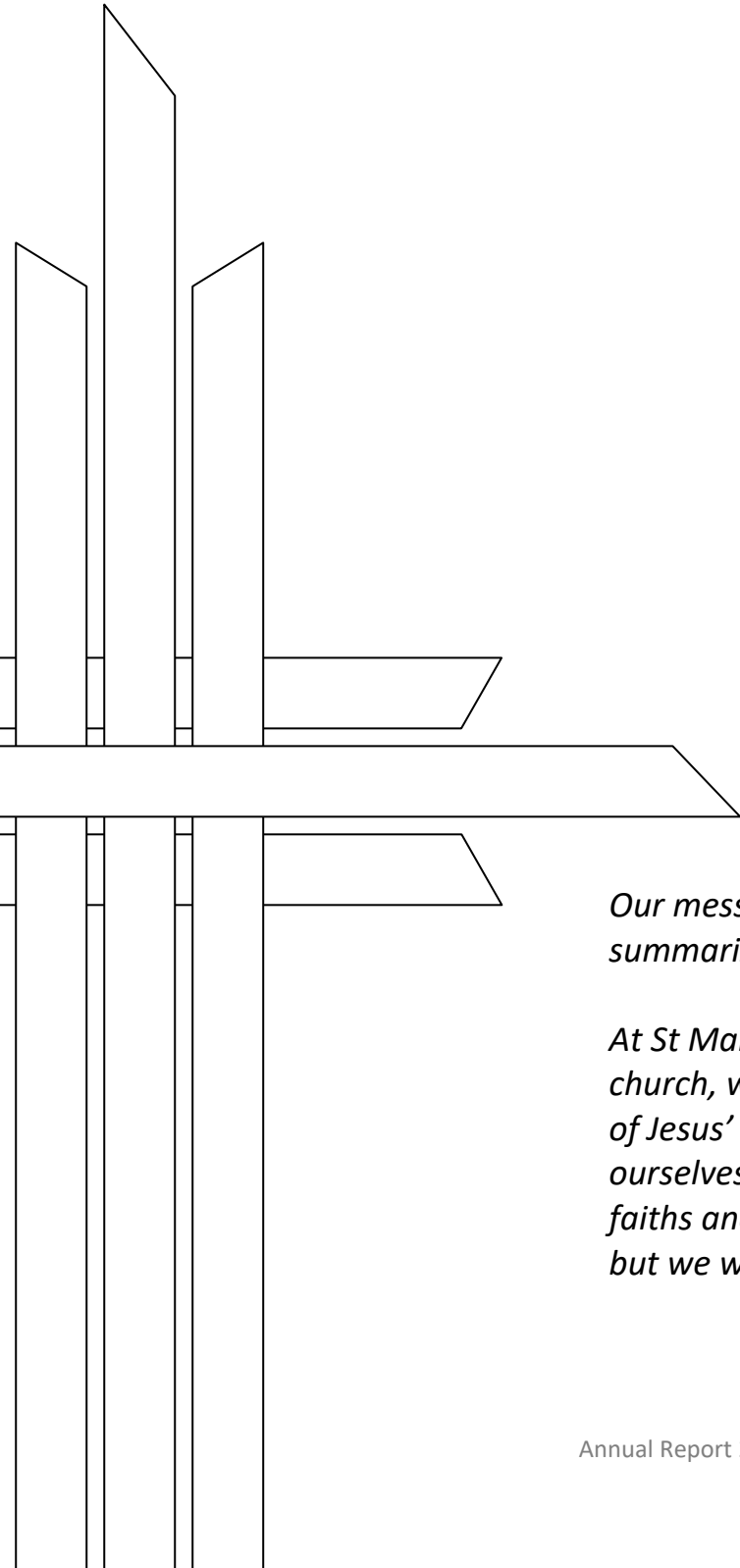


|St Marys|Pickersleigh|

Annual Report

St Mary's Pickersleigh PCC
For the year ended 31 December 2023



Our message to the community of Pickersleigh summarized in this report:

At St Mary's we are ALL volunteers. At the core of the church, we are Christians who do what we do because of Jesus' commandment to 'love our neighbours as ourselves'. Working with us are volunteers from all faiths and none. We won't impose our beliefs on you, but we wanted you to know why we do what we do –

Reference and Administrative Information

Name: St Mary's Church, Pickersleigh

Location: Sherrards Green Road, Malvern, WR14 2EE

Correspondence Address: Sherrards Green Road
Malvern
WR14 2EE

Telephone: 07473 813573 – for messages only

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/stmaryschurchpickersleigh>

Email: WeAreStMarys@googlemail.com

Bankers: Barclays

Independent Examiner: Mr Paul Lythgoe
145 Madresfield Road
Malvern
WR14 2HD

Structure, governance and management

The members of St Mary's PCC during 2023 were as follows:

Clergy – Revd Lynne Sparkes until 31 January 2023

Vacant from 1 February 2023

Church Wardens

David Sparkes until 31 January 2023

Chris Beale

Deanery Synod Representative

Jenny Green – appointed April 2023

PCC members

Beth Thomas

Helen Weir *(PCC Treasurer; PCC secretary; Parish Safeguarding Officer)*

Claire Charley *(Vice Chair of the PCC)*

Katherine Eglington

Brenda White *- appointed April 2023*

Jane Daly *- April-July 2023*

2023 – the context

2023 saw a period of major change for St Mary's. After 10 years in post, Revd Lynne Sparkes retired on 31st January. At a service on Sunday 15th January, she celebrated Holy Communion for the last time, and we thanked her for 10 years of service to the church and the local community. We also acknowledged the time given to the church by her husband David throughout that time.

So, on 1st February 2023, St Mary's Pickersleigh moved into a Vacancy and began the process of thinking about its future. Volunteers came forward to fill many roles to keep both the church services and the community outreach going. Churchwarden, Chris Beale, wrote a prayer at this point that was used continually throughout the year ahead:

We pray, O Lord, for our church, St Mary's. Please be with us and guide us in each step we take; help us to make the right decisions and to go forward sustained with your hope, strength and love, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

A special service was held at the end of March with the whole congregation involved in developing a vision/mission for St Mary's and a consensus over some key questions. The result of this was:

- 1) The following mission statement: ***St Mary's is a welcoming centre for all people. We have a caring and holistic approach to the people of Pickersleigh. We want to help them in both a material and spiritual way by coming alongside those we meet, growing in relationship with them and showing them the love of God.***
- 2) Unanimous agreement that we should explore the way forward with St Andrews and All Saints within the Chase Benefice.

What followed was a winding path that saw St Mary's develop its strength as a church through lay leadership, while working out how a closer relationship with St Andrews and All Saints might work.

By the end of 2023, both these strands were becoming increasingly interwoven, but with no firm conclusion as to the way forward.

Helen Weir, PCC Secretary

2023 – the overview

Following Lynne's retirement in January 2023, St Mary's worked hard to maintain a vibrant Christian presence in the Pickersleigh area. Members of the congregation used their time and talents in helping both the church and community projects move forward.

Over a dozen Ministers from across the Deanery and beyond took Holy Communion services on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, and two pianists from All Saints started playing at the occasional service, all enriching our worship. On the 2nd & 4th Sunday in the month, Chris Beale as ALM Worship, went from strength-to-strength, leading Worship for All and Morning Prayer services; - the team of 'piano operators' ensured we always had music.

A team of lay leaders was set up to develop more informal Café Church services on the four 5th Sundays during the year, taking different themes and inviting speakers.

In terms of children's work, we ran a very successful Experience Easter event with Great Malvern Primary School with our own volunteer leaders and others from local churches. We welcomed a young family to our Worship for All services and started to make these services more child focused with activities for children of all ages, with several children attending our Harvest and Christingle services. Pickersleigh Bears was re-established by local Mums and Children's Holiday Clubs restarted with 3 mornings in October half term and a Christmas Craft Workshop in December.

The Community Fridge and Refresh café continued to flourish with volunteers coming from within the church and the local community.

And while all this was going on, the long-awaited building refurbishment project took place achieving the objective determined during 2023 of enhancing the building and its grounds for the benefit of the church and the community

Warm thanks to everyone who helped St Mary's over the past year and our thanks to God who has guided us in each step we take.

Claire Charley, Vice Chair PCC

Church Attendance

In 2023 the attendance at the 10am Sunday morning service had an average of 17 (17 adults and no children).

During 2023 there were no baptisms or funerals. There was one wedding.

	2020 Before Lockdown 1	2020 Between lockdown 1& 2	2020 After lockdown 2	2021	2022	2023
Sunday 10am	18	15	18	18	14	17

Average attendances at St Mary's (Church of England Online Parish Returns)

Electoral Roll

At the end of 2022 there were 23 members on the Electoral Roll. At the revision of the Electoral Roll in April 2023, 2 people were removed and 3 new members added, bringing the total to 24. There were no further changes during the year so the number on the Electoral Roll at 31 December 2023 was 24.

Safeguarding

DBS re-issued 2023	New DBS issued 2023	Training required	Training completed
3	8	8	5

The re-opening of Pickersleigh Bears and the re-starting of Children's Holiday Clubs necessitated several new DBS checks to be completed. There were no issues with any of the DBS checks.

Similarly, there was a requirement for Foundation Safeguarding Training to be completed. Where this was able to be done online, this was completed successfully. Training sessions are scheduled at the beginning of 2024 for those who prefer to complete the training in person.

The Parish Dashboard, the online record of our compliance with Safeguarding requirements, was reviewed at each PCC meeting and actions taken to ensure as many lights were 'turned green' as possible.

Because St Mary's PCC are trustees of an organization that includes children's work, it is the policy of the Diocese, in line with the Charity Commissioners recommendations that all PCC members need to have an enhanced DBS check, although this cannot be legally enforced.

Since the election of PCC members in 2023, it has been made a condition of membership that all members of the PCC receive an enhanced DBS check and are required to complete the Foundation training module.

There were no Safeguarding issues during the year.

The PCC of St Mary's can therefore state that in the year under review, it has complied with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Helen Weir, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Financial Review

Despite budgeting for a £3000 deficit for the year, which became a predicted £12,000 deficit once the decision was made to pay the Ministry Share in full, 2023 finished with a deficit of just a few hundred pounds. This was an amazing result brought about by increased congregational giving, healthy hall lettings and a substantial amount of interest on money held in the church's bank accounts. It truly felt that in stepping out to continue God's work in the church and the community our faith had been honoured.

- Unrestricted income, which covers the day to day running of the church saw a deficit of less than £300.
- Donations to support the Community Fridge and Pastoral work in the Parish totalled over £8500. This included donations from:
 - The government's Household Support Fund
 - collections by the Malvern Quakers

- Waitrose
- Worcestershire Community Foundation Communities in Crisis Grant
- Hubbub which co-ordinates the Community Fridge network.

These monies were put into Designated and Restricted funds for use in 2023 onwards.

- Higher interest rates meant that we received over £7000 in bank interest.
- The PCC paid its Ministry Share of £12,672 in full.
- The building project started the year with £167,137 available to it. Following the decision to 'refurbish' rather than 'rebuild', a total of £118,373 was spent during 2023 leaving a balance of £48,765 at the end of 2023.

Helen Weir, PCC Treasurer

Reserves Policy

There is no change from the policy approved at the end of 2022:

'It is the policy of this church to hold in reserve the equivalent of two months' general running costs and an additional one month's salary costs.

As a bronze Eco Church recipient, St Mary's intends to hold a sum in reserve to allow for the installation of solar panels on the south facing roof of the church building. It is anticipated that the cost of this will be approximately £30,000.

The electric heating system in church is showing its age and will need replacement in the next few years. It is anticipated that the cost of this will be in the region of £8,000. The heating in the Jubilee Room is ineffective and also needs replacing, it is estimated that this will cost in the region of £1,500. The lighting in the Jubilee Room and the vestry need to be replaced with low energy LED fittings and this is estimated to cost £500.

This means that St Mary's would need to hold approximately £42,000 in reserve.

The PCC believes that, at present, it holds an amount in reserve sufficient to meet these needs.'

Fabric

The focus for the year was on refurbishment, meaning that some maintenance jobs were incorporated into this process:

- A new flat roof
- A new set of entrance doors and fire doors, all meeting the appropriate regulations
- Ramps to both Jubilee Room doors
- A new fence around the grounds which is both more visually appealing and creates a safe place for children to play
- Re-laid paving to entrance doors and Jubilee Room doors
- A new kitchen, double the size of the original
- Redecoration of the church
- New blinds
- Blown windows in the Chancel replaced
- Repairs to the Gents urinals

Deanery Synod.

This has seen significant changes in the Deanery, as Malvern and Upton look to work together to build God's Kingdom across town and rural parishes. Our Area Dean left to take the position of Archdeacon; the new Area Dean is Gary Crellin, Vicar of Powick. Phillip Johnson of St Matthias also left us, and further Clergy changes are expected during 2024. The future meetings will look at Children and Youth in the Church.

Jenny Green, Deanery Synod Representative

Work with Children and Young People

- The Spring Term saw us run Experience Easter with Years 3 and 6 from Great Malvern Primary School. How joyful it was to share the Easter story with them and hear their own interesting and thoughtful contributions!

- Pickersleigh Bears re-opened in April run by young Mothers from the Pickersleigh area. The story and song spots were retained, and positive relationships developed within the group.
- Like many churches we lost all our children during Covid, so it was a great blessing to start welcoming even one or two children to our Worship for All services. This created the impetus to make these services more interactive and welcoming and meant that Harvest and Christingle had a truly family feel.
- Children's Holiday Club returned for 3 mornings in October half-term, welcoming 16 children from the Pickersleigh area. This was followed up by a Christmas Craft Workshop in December, including an impromptu nativity play. This core group of children gives us a great platform for children's work as we move into 2024.

Activities generating income

The church continued to be used throughout the year with regular bookings from AA, Line Dancing, Keep Fit, Senior Residents Group and Karate. During the year a new Brownie pack joined us, and, along with Traffic Light Café, became regular bookings. A men's group for Separated Fathers also ran for half the year.

The church was hired out to the local community for 11 parties and to MHDC as a polling station once during the year. Overall, hire of the hall contributed £4,500 to church funds.

The only fund-raising activity that took place during the year was a series of jumble sales, the proceeds of which are to be used to purchase banners for the church.

Community Fridge

With the retirement of Lynne, the day to day running of the Community Fridge was taken on by Michelle, a volunteer from outside St Mary's congregation, who had supported the venture from the beginning in 2021.

Throughout the year, the Fridge continued to prevent food going into landfill but increasingly became a resource for those in the local community who were adversely affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Several grants were made to the Fridge to support both

its running costs and to supplement the food offered. Via MHDC, £5000 of government financial support from the Household Support Fund 4 was received to be spent on additional food supplies between June 2023 and March 2024. This meant that an additional £500 a month was spent on staple goods – rice, pasta, tinned & packeted goods – along with fresh vegetables, some dairy products and sanitary products. Food from the Fridge continued to be free to all who came through the door, but a simple form of rationing meant that food was shared as fairly as possible.

In addition to this, generous donations from an individual donor meant that special Easter packs could be given to all customers. A donation from Waitrose was used to prepare special children's lunch bags for distribution during school holidays – each pack supplied enough for 6 lunches for one child. A donation from Malvern Quakers meant that special Christmas bags were distributed before the Fridge closed for Christmas.

Michelle was supported by a team of 10 volunteers collecting food, buying food and supplies, as well as working in the Fridge on a Thursday & Friday. A huge thank-you goes to them all for their support to the Fridge, St Mary's, and the community of Pickersleigh.

Refresh Community Café

During 2023 our Refresh Cafe has gone from strength to strength. We have seen a steady rise in visitors to the cafe. Refresh Cafe welcomes all people not just from the community but from the surrounding areas. It is a way for people to come and enjoy a relaxing and friendly atmosphere, to meet up with friends, families and strangers for a chat over a drink of tea, coffee and toast and cake.

The cafe is run by volunteers, and I would like to give my sincere thanks to Jordan, Emmy, Helen, Beth, Jodie and Brenda for all their help running the cafe during this last year, they have been a tremendous support.

Chris Beale, Refresh Café Organiser