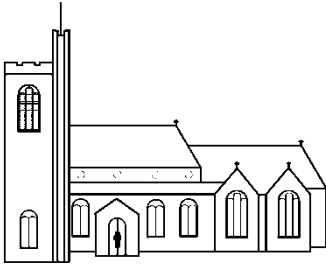


The Parish of
St Mary the Virgin, Welwyn,
with St Michael and All Angels,
Woolmer Green



St Mary's, Welwyn



St Michael's, Woolmer Green

Annual Parochial
Church Meeting
(APCM)

Wednesday 1st May 2024
in Church House

Holy Communion – 7.15pm
Meeting Commences – 8.00pm

Contents	
	Pages
Notice of a meeting for the election of churchwardens	3
Notice of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting	4
Make up of the PCC as at eve of APCM 2024	5/6
Appointment of sidespersons	7
<u>Primary Reports</u>	
Team Rector's Report	8
PCC Secretaries Report	8/9
Deanery Synod Report	10/11
Team Council Report	11
Safeguarding Report	11
St Mary's Fabric Report	12/13
St Michael's Fabric Report	14
<u>Secondary Reports</u>	
Arpeggios	15
Bible Discovery	16
Wednesday Morning Breakfast Bible Study	17
Birds and Pray	17
Lent Courses	17
St Mary's Churchwardens' Report	18/19
St Michael's, Woolmer Green Report	20/21
Community Café	22/23
Community Lunch	24
Fellowship	24
Fairtrade	25
Giving Action Group	26
St Mary's Bellringing Band	27
St Mary's Flower Team	28
St Mary's Choir	29/30
St Mary's Welcome Team	30
St Mary's Walking Group	31
Time For Reflection	32
The Welwyn with Woolmer Green Magazine	32

Care Homes Ministry	33
St Mary's Drama Group	33
Sunday morning coffee	34
St Mary's book and card stall	34
St Mary's Evening Book Group	35
St Mary's Afternoon Book Group	35
Draft Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting	36-41

NOTICE OF A MEETING FOR
THE
ELECTION OF
CHURCHWARDENS

A meeting of parishioners for the election of churchwardens will be held on Wednesday 1st May 2024 at 7:55 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Opening prayer.
2. Minutes of meeting held on 3rd May 2023.
3. Election of churchwardens.

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) will be held on Wednesday 1st May 2024 at 8:00 p.m. following the meeting for election of churchwardens.

AGENDA

1. Chairman's welcome and opening remarks.
2. Attendance list and apologies for absence.
3. Minutes of APCM meeting held on 3rd May 2023.
4. Matters arising.
5. Presentation of electoral roll – Diane Jenkin
6. Elections.
 - i) Lay members to the Deanery Synod
 - ii) Lay members to the PCC.
 - iii) Sidespersons.
7. Finance report and appointment of independent examiner of accounts – Maggie Varco
8. Team Rector's report.
9. Other Primary reports
 - i) PCC Secretaries' report
 - ii) Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod Report
 - iii) Team Council Report
 - iv) St Mary's Fabric Report
 - v) St Mary's Safeguarding Report
 - vi) St Michael's Church, Woolmer Green Report
10. Other reports.
11. Any other business.
12. Closing prayers.

Notes relating to the 2024 Parochial Church Council

Candidates nominated for election to the Parochial Church Council must:

- 1 be on the Electoral Roll
- 2 be 16 years of age or more
- 3 have taken communion at least three times in the past year

It is the practice in this Parish:

to obtain the express consent of the candidate

- 4 to complete a nomination form, signed by the proposer and seconder

Make up of PCC as at eve of APCM 2024

Ex-officio: Clergy:

Christie Gilfeather

Ex-officio: Church Wardens:

Diane Jenkin

Stuart Westley

Representatives to the Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod

Ex-officio: Deanery Synod:

Vernonne Allan

Colin Hull

Mavis Francis

Readers on the Parochial Church Council

Readers:

John Burnapp

Colin Hull

Usha Hull

Election of lay members to the Parochial Church Council

Elected PCC members (12)	Term from 2024
Crystal Lam	1 year to go
Liz Hesketh	1 year to go
Jackie Davis (WG) - Treasurer St Michael's	End of Term
Georgina Beck	2 years to go
Maggie Varco - Treasurer to St Mary's	2 years to go
Stuart Jenkin - Fabric	2 years to go
Joan Shelley	2 years to go
Helen McKay	2 years to go
Christine Allday	2 years to go

There are therefore three places available on the PCC for a 3-year term.

Appointment of sidespersons for St Mary's church

Vernonne Allan
Peter and Patricia Brattle
Martin & Liz Browne
Alice Burnapp
Rose Cantillon Webber
Michael & Gay Carpenter
Clare Farrow
Geoff Cummings
Judith Hollands
Keith and Linda Norman
Diane Petty
Jane Robson
Keith Thompson
Roger & Carole Trigg
Ann Harper
Anne Symonds
Susan Wray

St Michael's Church sidespersons:

Christine Allday
Gill & Simon Blewett
Doreen Croft
Shoena Eggington
Nita Gowans
Betty Hodge
Margaret Holdcroft
Susan Keach

Primary Reports

Team Rector's Report – *The Rev'd Dr David Munchin*

This will be read aloud; copies to be made available at the meeting.

PCC Secretaries' Report – *Louise and David Hughes*

The secretaries' responsibilities include ensuring that correct procedure is followed by the PCC, issuing notices of meetings in good time, ensuring that reports are prepared on time, preparing the agenda for meetings, dealing with correspondence, preparing the minutes of meetings, keeping a check on the parish diary and knowing what is going on in the life of the churches generally. The APCM booklet was also prepared by the secretaries in advance of the annual meeting.

Parochial Church Council Meetings continued to be held every other month throughout 2023 as normal and once the welcome and opening prayer and apologies for absence have been done meetings usually begin with finance reports from the treasurer - Maggie Varco. At the beginning of the year MV estimated a deficit in church finances of £35,000 for the year, mainly due to the anticipated additional cost of gas to heat the church and Church House as well as increased cost of electricity. Much thought was given by members of the Council to ways of raising income to mitigate these increases and during the year a lot of people put in a great deal of effort to raise funds so it is pleasing to be able to report that by the end of the year the deficit had been reduced to £6,000.

Appointments and resignations: During the year the PCC was sorry to lose the services and wise counsel of Sue Keach who decided that it was time to stand down from the PCC and as a church warden at St Michael's. Sheona Eggington and Geoff Cummings also decided to call time as trustees of the PCC. The PCC is duly grateful for their contributions.

In their place the PCC was pleased to welcome Mavis Francis, Helen McKay and Christine Allday as new members. Mavis also joined Vernonne Allan and Colin Hull as a representative to the Deanery Synod.

A new fire safety system was successfully installed at St Mary's in order to comply with current regulations and an emergency evacuation drill was successfully carried out after one of the Sunday services.

The minutes of PCC meetings have followed the progress of the rector's Mission Action Plan, Crystal Lam's support for the elderlies project and Robert Milner's innovations with the choir as the Director of Music. Additionally various policies including health and safety and legacy policy have been brought up-to-date.

David Hughes transcribed the minutes of the PCC meetings to report style for publication in The Welwyn Magazine.

Please contact me if you have any questions relating to the PCC at louiseelhughes37@gmail.com

Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod Report

– *Vernonne Allan*

St Mary's Church is a member of the Welwyn Hatfield Deanery. Deanery Synod Meetings bring together all Anglican clergy of Welwyn and Hatfield as well as all Readers and laity representatives from each church.

Currently I am a laity member representing St Mary's Welwyn. This year Mavis Francis joined as a second lay member. Colin Hull attends as a Reader. St Michael's and All Angels, Woolmer Green did not have a representative this year.

The synod receives reports on General Synod matters and meetings, diocesan synod meetings and the work of the Diocesan Board of Finance and its various committees. The Synod also considers safeguarding and data protection issues at each meeting. In addition, the pastoral committee of the deanery synod has regard to the wellbeing of the clergy.

Three meetings took place this year in churches across the deanery: in March at St Etheldreda's in Hatfield, in June at St Mary Magdalene's, Hatfield Hyde and in and October at All Saints Church, Datchworth. The PCC received reports on these meetings.

In March Rev. Canon David Kesterton was guest speaker: based at All Saints with St. Peter's in Luton, David spoke of his experience working with refugees and asylum seekers over the past three years; St Peter's is part of the "City of Sanctuary" building a network of support across the country.

In June the guest speaker was Kate Ford who gave a timely talk on "One off gifts and legacies." She recommended the advantages of the Parish Giving Scheme which makes life much easier for Parish Treasurers. This is now recommended at St Mary's and St Michael's for regular giving.

In October the guest speaker was Rev Tim Bull – Diocesan

Director of Vocations who addressed the question “how worried should we be about Artificial Intelligence?” After much discussion and questions, the answer was “We don’t need to worry about AI, we need to worry about the people using AI”.

It is hoped that a member of the congregation of St Michael's will join the lay representative team: with only three meetings a year, excellent guest speakers, as well as insight into the operation and aims of our deanery, our diocese and of General Synod, it is a privilege to be involved.

Team Council Report – *The Rev’d Dr David Munchin*

The Team Council met on three occasions in 2023 – 15th March, 14th June and 27th September

The Team Council consists of the Team Rector, five representatives of the Ministry Team and two lay representatives from each church.

The purposes and tasks of the Team Council are laid out in its constitution.

Matters discussed in these meeting included:

- Safeguarding (Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection)
- Team events and activities (e.g. Summer Evensongs)

St Mary’s Safeguarding Report – *Vicky Jenkin*

No safeguarding issues identified. One incident was escalated but it was deemed pastoral and was dealt with by David Munchin.

St Mary's Fabric Report – *Stuart Jenkin*

St. Mary's Church Welwyn – Fabric Report to the APCM for the year 2023

1. **Heating** - Both the church and Church House have been kept at a comfortable level of heating through the cold period. We continue to experience control problems and are still seeking anyone with experience on a Trend BMS system.
2. **The Eastern Cemetery Wall** - The Eastern wall that fell down in Feb 2020 was completely rebuilt by the Parish council managed by local Architect Francesca Weal Associates during the year
3. **Roof safe System** - This has been upgraded to meet current regulations.
4. **Water Heater** - A new water heater for the Kitchen was installed after the failure of the existing boiler.
5. **Hot water Urn** - in the kitchen. This unit failed and was replaced with a new one.
6. **Trees in the Churchyard** - The Parish council removed the dead Cherry Tree and trimmed back the oak tree by the main entrance. They also carried out a tree survey of all the trees in the Churchyard.
7. **Concrete Path** - Several of the concrete slabs that form the pathway to the side gate had settled causing a trip hazard. The parish council has repaired these slabs.
8. **External Lighting** - The external lighting is coming towards the end of its economic life. However, various repairs have now been carried out together with replacing the timer system which should keep it going for a while.
9. **Lightning Conductor** - After inspection it was found that the lightning conductor needed upgrade works. These have been completed.
10. **Emergency Lighting** - Upon inspection it was found several of the emergency lights had failed. These have now been replaced.

11. **Removal of Rubbish** - A substantial amount of rubbish and redundant equipment had accumulated outside Church House. A contractor was hired who efficiently removed it.

12. **Sustainability** - The PCC is keen to explore initiatives wherever possible to strive to meet Net Carbon Zero requirements.

13. **Gardening** - A new bench has been installed in the Memorial Garden. The gardening team continue to maintain this area.

14. **Wi-Fi** - The Wi-Fi router failed in Church House. This has been replaced with a new one.

15. **Pipe Leak** - A pipe in Church House roof was found to be leaking and damaging the ceiling and cupboard boxing in the storeroom. This has now been repaired.

16. **Compliance** - During the year the following have been completed • Gas safety certificate for boiler • Lightning Conductor testing • Roof Safety inspection • Fire Extinguishers inspection. • Emergency Lights inspection • Lift Service Church House • Man safe roof system • Roof Alarm testing • Fire alarm Testing • Insurance Engineering Report on Lift & Boiler • Gutter Cleaning • Kitchen Deep clean and grease extract clean

St Michael's Church, Woolmer Green Fabric Report –
Chris Allday

- 1 The fire extinguishers were checked and replaced where necessary.
- 2 The gutters have been cleaned.
- 3 Some of the tiles on the North side of the roof have started flaking. They were inspected by the roofer and it was decided just to monitor the roof at this stage. The roof is weather proof.
- 4 The church is cleaned once a month and the Romanian Congregation tidy up after all their services, so the church looks clean and well cared for.
- 5 We have a new contractor for churchyard maintenance and this seems to be working well.
- 6 The organ was cleaned and repaired.
- 7 Our next electrical inspection is due in October 2026.
- 8 A new lock was fitted to the outer vestry door.
- 9 We are due for a quinquennial inspection.

St Michael's remains well cared for and as visitors to the church often remark 'It is a lovely church. '

Secondary Reports

Arpeggios Hand Bell Ringers– *Jenny McCann*

The group originated in 1986 and has performed extensively across the County. We are very fortunate to use the extensive range of Handbells covering more than three octaves which belong to the Church.

Over recent years there has been a decline in membership due to ill-health and retirement and 2023 was no exception. The group ideally needs at least eight ringers but has been obliged to curtail its musical repertoire to accommodate fewer. Nevertheless, we continued to meet regularly on Thursday afternoons in Church House throughout the earlier part of the year and in July once again were invited to perform at the Wednesday Community Club at Potters Bar Baptist Church where we received a very warm response. Due to illness and holidays, practices were few and far between from August onwards as we worked towards an engagement to ring for the St Mary's Church Fellowship "Christmas Surprise" on 12 December which was enjoyed by all. This performance was dedicated to the memory of one of our longest serving members Pauline Anderson, the lynch pin of the group, who died on 9th December 2023 after a short illness.

We plan to resume activities from February 2024 whilst actively seeking new members to join us in discovering the joy of making music together. If you would be interested in finding out more and possibly join us, please contact Marcia Khan on 01438 716625.

Bible Discovery – *Gay and Mike Carpenter*

We know from our own experience that the best way to learn, and enjoy learning, is in a group of fellow explorers where there is mutual respect and a growing fellowship which is never exclusive but open and welcoming to newcomers. Our aim is to try and provide this at Bible Discovery.

At the beginning of the year, we found we had 4 sessions before stopping to join in with the Lent course. We invited people to choose a person from the Bible, or elsewhere, and choices included Daniel, David, Ruth, Susannah from the Apocrypha and St. Bernadette of Lourdes.

In 2021, we had begun an exploration of St. Luke's Gospel which we planned to resume in the summer term, but, due to illness, we only managed one session. To try and make up for this big hole in our fellowship, we organized a summer tea party on our lawn for September 7th so we could meet up and enjoy Katie's wonderful spread.

Then back to St. Luke in the autumn term. Two things that stood out for us as we pored over the Gospel were Luke's special concern for the marginalized which directed him to record such incidents notable in the parables as The Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son. And the other was how easy it is to misinterpret a passage because we don't know the 1st century setting.

At Christmas, we all decided we'd like to do something for charity and we chose to support Tina Banks of ALFS. Tina suggested we might like to fill shoe boxes for a community she was supporting where bereaved wives and their children were living together. We had a wonderful evening cramming all sorts of gifts into 64 boxes, and later received a video of the children opening them looking so happy and excited. That was like a Christmas present to all of us.

Wednesday Morning Breakfast Bible Study –
The Rev'd Dr David Munchin

Every Wednesday morning a group meets in Church House from 8am – 9am with breakfast provided from Katie's. We study the bible by looking at the three readings for the following Sunday. We use a version of *lectio divina* before meandering off to whatever takes our fancy. All are welcome, breakfast is free, you can say what you want and get the drop on the Sunday preacher.

Birds and Pray – Colin Hull (Birds and Wildlife Group)

Formed in Nov 2022 we are a small group of bird and wildlife enthusiasts who take local walks to together to enjoy God's creation and pray with thanks for what we see. Immersing ourselves in creation is an immersion in prayer.

We meet mainly on a Saturday morning visiting Digswell Lake or walking in Ayot St Peter.

If interested in joining us please contact me.
colinhull88@btinternet.com

Lent Courses – The Rev'd Dr David Munchin

Lent courses followed a home- grown course written by our curate, Christie on the Psalms. There were seven well attended groups. It was good to have a biblical course, written by a local expert, on a book which contains perhaps the most complete companion to all emotions evoked by the human condition.

Church Wardens' Report, St Mary's, Welwyn

– *Diane Jenkin and Stuart Westley*

The demands of the pandemic now seem well in the past. It is though assuring to reflect that we no longer need to maintain eagle eyed surveillance of our congregations. The fear that an aspect of the regulations might be infringed, possibly prompting an insensitive intervention, happily has gone. The regulations are now dismantled. Much pre-covid practice has been restored but not collections during the services, use of cash now being much reduced. The card reader is clearly a permanent feature.

We have seen increased hiring of Church House around its regular use by Church Groups. This is in line with the intentions of those who so admirably brought about the construction of Church House some fifteen years ago. Their wish was that in addition for providing a high-quality building for worshippers, Church House would also act as a welcoming social point for groups within the village. So, it is proving, with the building used by a variety of groups for quite interesting, diverse, purposes. If you think hiring the building might help with planning whatever function you might have in mind, please do not hesitate to be in touch; we can often oblige and we wish to do so.

Few will now be unaware that in the last year our financial situation has become uncomfortable, largely caused by costs, particularly those connected with utilities, rising alarmingly. In the Autumn the situation was spelled out with clarity and with sensitivity. The message appears well understood within the community; it has produced a generous and encouraging response, including from regular users of Church House, who have accepted modest increases in the hire charge. There is though more to do to reach where we need to be. The increased income from letting Church House is a small but

important step towards the goal, with the opportunity for the momentum to continue to build.

Similarly, few within the Church will be unaware of the need to increase volunteers or of the large number of tasks which need to be undertaken on a regular basis to enable the Church to function as we all wish. In February the Rector led an initiative designed to encourage those able to come forward to do so. There has been a tangible and encouraging response. So, thank you most warmly those who have volunteered, no names, but you know who you are, and so do we! That's great!

It's equally important to be aware of those who do volunteer regularly, often providing time consuming, irreplaceable services which, because they are done without fanfare, we easily overlook. Maybe we might focus slightly less on areas of shortage and rather more on the amazing contributions of many who enable our Church community much more than just to tick over? I write this (behind schedule) a few hours after seeing and hearing with delight a full row of junior choristers opening our Mothering Sunday Service. Well Done children! You have embarked upon a fantastically fulfilling initiative which includes providing pleasure for others. You are immensely welcome.

One of many instances of teamwork enables our Church to be open to everyone for quiet prayer and reflection every day of the year, an important but, rightly, unheralded service to the community. We do not shut up for holidays; we find a way to cope with them and we intend that to continue.

Thank you for your help and encouragement as we aim to support our Church and its congregation.

St Michael and All Angels, Woolmer Green –
Sue Keach and Jackie Davis

Once again we have had a busy year at St Michael's. Several of our activities have been fund raisers, but this is no bad thing. Getting together to organise the events has a team building effect, and by inviting people into the church we show the wider community that we at St Michael's church are very much alive.

During the cold winter months, we ran a Warm Space in the village hall on Monday afternoons for people to get a cuppa and a cake or pastry that had been donated by Knebworth Co-op. It was a good opportunity to meet new people and have a chat.

The first event was a plant sale and coffee morning. We had let the large plant sale lapse but were persuaded to run a pared down event. People donated their surplus plants. We did very well, and it was a happy occasion although it did serve to remind us that running even a cut down version still takes a good deal of energy. Last year's effort will be our last plant sale. (Though we did say that before!)

We, as usual, ran the tea tent at Woolmer Green village day. This year the weather was against us! It was a warm day and people were wanting something cool and long to drink rather than a good cup of tea! We sold a lot of cake but our takings were down.

In September we celebrated the Feast of St. Michael by having an open day in the church. We drew people's attention to the church building which is much appreciated by members of the 'Arts and Crafts' movement, who consider it to be a fine example of this style of architecture. Two local architects with a keen interest in the period gave informative illustrated talks and we now look at our place of worship in a different light.

As well as highlighting the church building, we reminded people of one of Woolmer Green's most colourful past

residents, Harry McDonald, the local woodcarver. Stevenage Museum Service lent us examples of his work, as did local residents and Woolmer Green Parish Council. It was a joy to see them all together and to remember the days when Harry's carved model village stood on the corner of Mardelbury road. Judith Watson was the inspiration behind this event and we should like to thank her and Gill Blewett for their research and hard work in arranging it. We are also very grateful to Jacky from the Red Lion who provided refreshments and generously gave all the proceeds to swell church funds.

We were very pleased that having been ordained priest by the Bishop of Hertford on the previous day, Christie chose to preside over her first Eucharist at Woolmer Green. The church was packed with her friends and relations. We all felt it a great privilege to witness Christie's next step in her ordained ministry.

We are enjoying having Christie as our curate and have welcomed her work in forging links between the church and St. Michael's school. Her Christian club is flourishing, and the whole school regularly come into the church to worship. The year passed by with the usual landmarks. The Lent group studied some of the psalms and the meetings were well attended, as was the moving 'Stations of the Cross' service on Good Friday. We had a traditional Harvest Festival followed by an enjoyable bring and share lunch. Thanks to Penny, the band and choir the Christmas services were beautiful. As usual the most popular seasonal service was the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. It was a joy to hear the children sing a new arrangement of 'While Shepherds Watch' and to accompany it with gusto on percussion instruments.

One innovation this year has been our bi-monthly St Michael's meeting in the Red Lion pub. Folk were not keen to go out in the dark winter's evenings but this slot after our Sunday Service has hit the spot and is well attended. A glass of beer/wine and a delicious Sunday lunch seemed to help everything go with a swing as we ate our way through the agenda!

Our first quiz since prior to Covid took place in October. It was a sell-out - Christie's questions were well received as was the fish 'n' chip supper.

An attractive play area has been created at the back of St Michael's for the toddlers that are now attending some services. This has partly been responsible for some parents saying how welcome they feel at St Michael's.

As you will realise St Michael's Church Woolmer Green is an active and busy church. Why not come and join us?

The Community Café - Liz Hesketh

written by Ian Skidmore

The Community Café was founded as a joint venture between St Mary's Parochial Church Council and the Welwyn Parish Plan Group. From small beginnings in November 2009, it has gone from strength to strength, weathering the Covid pandemic along the way.

The objective was to provide a place in Welwyn where people could go for a cup of coffee or tea, not a commercial operation but a community facility, open for a couple of hours once a week every week. As such it would, we hoped, attract a regular clientele not just people popping in for a cup every now and then, as might happen with a coffee shop. And so, it has proved. Some of our regulars have been with us from the beginning and we have a real café community, not just a Community Café.

For a venture such as this to be successful several factors must be in place.

An attractive venue: Church House fits the bill perfectly. In addition, as part of the JV we are not charged for its use, which allows us to keep our costs and thus our charges to a minimum.

Good management: Since starting in 2009 we have had five volunteer Café managers:

Jill Elsdon, Barbara Spencer, Lesley Watson, Jean Perriman and Liz Hesketh. They have been the backbone of the café and without them the project would have died a long time ago. The unsung part of their role has been and remains keeping the café finances on an even keel.

Willing Volunteers: Too many to count but each one committing to at least one session a month and willing to step in to fill gaps when one occurs. Some have been volunteering since 2009!

Customers! Or rather familiar friends and the *raison d'être* of the café. Some again have been with us since the beginning. Typically, we have between 40 and 50 people joining us each week.

The café has always produced a small surplus each year, split between the PCC and the Parish Plan Group. It was very small but still there during the Covid years. Recently however, the cost of supplies, which have gradually increased over the years have reached the point where we had to increase charges so on November 1st 2023, 14 years after the café started, we increased our prices for the first time. Our customers have taken this in their stride and we are as busy as ever.

Community Lunch – *Mavis Francis*

We started the lunches again in January 2023 after a break during COVID. These have been well attended and according to guests have been really appreciated. Many are living on their own and state that it is lovely to have a meal with others whilst making new friends. We have to thank Maria and her team from Fizz Catering for both the excellent food and service. £682 was donated to the Fabric fund for St. Mary's during 2023. We have now started another year of lunches and extend our thanks to the Danesbury charity shop for their involvement.

Fellowship – *Marcia Khan*

Our Christmas "Surprise" was snowfall, but a small group of us braved the weather to meet up in Church House for hot drinks, tasty mince pies and Stollen. January's lunch was very enjoyable and we will be distributing the menu and booking form for our lunch on 9th January 2024 at our meeting on 14th November, as bookings and payment need to be made at our 12th December meeting.

2023's talks have included "Butterfly Volunteers at Lister Hospital", "The History of Bread", "Life with Ukrainian Guests", "Painters in their own Pictures?", "Living in Norway" and our delicious Strawberry Tea took place in July.

Details of future meetings are usually posted in Church pew sheets and on the back cover of the Welwyn magazine together with my contact details.

Everyone is welcome to join us for our meetings, which are followed by tea and cakes. We request a £2 donation per person towards refreshments, a raffle and donation to charities.

Fairtrade – *Maggie Varco and the Fairtrade team*

St. Mary's fairtrade café and stall is open on Saturday mornings from 10am – 11.30am in Church House, and is run by our team of volunteers. The drop-in café is a popular meeting place and offers a warm welcome to newcomers to the church.

We were saddened when Traidcraft plc went into administration in January 2023 following a number of years of financial difficulties. Since the fairtrade stall started in St Mary's over 20 years ago, Traidcraft has been our supplier of fairtrade goods. They provided valuable information and inspiration too about the importance of supporting producers in the global south and they were a pioneering organisation launching the fairtrade movement in the UK.

There are other fairtrade suppliers out there but none has such a wide variety of different products nor is geared towards supporting small groups such as ours who run church stalls. After ordering from 4 or 5 of these companies for a few months, it proved too cumbersome and time-consuming and we decided to close the fairtrade stall in the autumn.

We sold the remaining stock by the end of the year but we continue to run the thriving drop-in café serving fairtrade tea, coffee and biscuits for the church 'regulars' and the wider village community.

Giving Action Group – Jo Fozzard

The role of GAG is twofold: -

Stewardship: to look at strategies to motivate people, as they are able, to give of their time, talents and their money to the church.

Charitable: to facilitate charitable giving by St Mary's to aim for a target equivalent to at least 15% of planned and plate giving on a rolling three-year average.

There is a sense in which giving to St Mary's and giving support to the charitable causes promoted through our church in Welwyn are one and the same. If we, as a church, are to honour our commitment to give a proportion of income to other charities, we, as individuals, are supporting our church by organising and responding to activities for the benefit of those charities, be they special collections, social events (coffee mornings, quizzes), or produce stalls such as Fairtrade, to mention but a few.

Thank you for continuing to support the church in maintaining its mission and commitment to supporting numerous very worthy causes.

Local Charities £4,808

Includes Whitechapel Mission

National Charities £ 998

Includes MacMillan Cancer Support

International charities £11,712

Includes DEC Turkey and Syria Earthquake appeal
And DEC Ukraine appeal

St Mary's Bellringing Band – *John Williams*

In 2023 St Mary's Ringing Band rang regularly before Sunday Services from 9.00 - 9.30am (every Sunday). Unfortunately, due to a reduction in band members, ringing for Sunday Evening Services has ceased for the time being. We were usually able to ring at least six of the eight bells for services. The band practised on Tuesdays from 7.45 to 9.00pm. In addition, the band rang a standard 6 bells for weddings when booked - and 8 for special services when requested, the latter dependent band member availability. The band also maintained the clock, hoisted and lowered flags on the Tower when required and looked after visiting bands.

In 2023 we rang for six weddings, hosted four district practices and three visiting bands who rang quarter peals (45 – 60 minutes of continuous ringing). We also hosted a visiting band from Epping/Waltham Abbey. The band also rang to mark the coronation of King Charles III.

We have lost a number of ringers and currently have only 10 regular ringers. Only 3 are Church members so St. Mary's owes a debt of gratitude to all the band for turning out for Sunday and special service ringing so reliably – unlike so many towers where service ringing is occasional, not regular. It takes some time to become a competent ringer so it needs determination, but we do have an enjoyable time on the way. Please consider whether you might like to learn to ring and enjoy the gentle aerobic exercise (and the not so healthy – but optional - social activity after the practice). We always welcome learners, especially as several of us are in our 70s! For more information contact the Tower Secretary John Williams, on 01438 715679 or email

bells@welwyn.org.uk. It's one person on each rope, so to ring all our 8 bells we need 8 ringers. It goes without saying that if you have rung in the past and are not currently part of a band that rings on Sundays you would be very welcome at St Mary's, Welwyn.

St Mary's Flower Team – Jenny Wiseman

The team got together to decorate the church for the three main festivals, Easter, Harvest and Christmas. In addition, we marked the Coronation in May with special arrangements and chose red and gold for our colour theme.

85 lilies to remember loved ones were sponsored at Easter. The Chapel of Repose was decorated for Maundy Thursday and we used twisted hazel branches supplied by Linda Dobbs who had recently pruned her trees. For the three hours of the watch, the candle-lit chapel looked beautiful.

We were responsible for the flowers for 3 weddings during 2023. We did arrangements during the year to contribute to special events: Rob and Veronique's golden wedding anniversary, the memorial service for Peter Lee, flowers in memory of Beryl Hammond and Dennis Dinsdale. At Easter and Christmas, we arranged flowers in memory of Fiona and Rowena's parents, and for members of the Lund family.

Mothering Sunday daffodil posies were produced by the team and other volunteers.

We are doing our best to be "green" by using chicken wire as the base for dishes and troughs. It is more difficult to use this than floral oasis. I do try and get the bio-degradable Oasis, but this still takes a long time to break down in landfill. We'll keep persevering though! Apologies to Hyacinth to give you the short straw for your first time with the team. I asked her to do a trough using chicken wire! With a name like Hyacinth though – she must be in the Flower Team.

At the end of the year, we were very sad to learn of the deaths of two much valued members: Pat Lewis and Valerie Ryan. Pat had moved a couple of years ago to Gloucestershire. She was a very experienced Constance Spry trained flower arranger. Her words of advice will stay with me forever: "Always leave room for the butterflies" and "If in doubt, leave it out".

Valerie had moved from Kent to Welwyn a few years ago and we were lucky enough to have her decorate the pulpit for many of our recent festivals.

May they rest in peace.

St Mary's Choir – Rob Milner

When I joined, the choir had been through some challenging times – with Covid and changes in leadership. I think we pulled together well when I joined, getting the choir back to its traditions pre-Covid – with the choir supporting worship at the 9:30 service and being able to let rip a bit more at the monthly evensong.

Membership has, on the whole, grown with new members coming in to all parts. We have had 3 long standing members retire after long service to the choir. We also welcomed a Ukrainian refugee who is now studying singing at Leeds Conservatoire (and singing at Leeds Minster choir). Choirs survive only by getting new members join and we do need more in all parts – particularly men. We have a talented bunch of singers but a low number of tenors and basses restricts what we can sing.

We have recruited 2 new organists to the church – Malcolm and Roger – who share the role between them and they tell me they also love playing at St Mary's. We have a choral scholarship scheme running – encouraging secondary age children to learn the rich repertoire of church music we're privileged to sing. We currently have 3 roles filled but can have up to 8 so your help to find more would be appreciated. We are also looking at the potential for having an organ scholar at St Mary's who would hugely benefit from learning to accompany the choir on our high quality organ. Getting more young people into choral music is vital if the choral tradition is going to survive and often leads to church musicians for life and they learn a great deal on the scholarship scheme – setting them up for potential further opportunities at university.

Our fledgling Junior Choir ran for 2 terms very successfully but folded as Y6 pupils wanted to focus on their new Y7 schools. However, we have just restarted the choir and hope it is able to grow and thrive.

Musical highlights of course include the carol services around Christmas and our singing of Stainer's Crucifixion on Good

Friday. We continue to occasionally push to sing music that is at the edge of our capability so that we can improve as a choir over time and we sing music new to the choir regularly to develop good sight-reading skills. Our evensongs and carol services are available to listen to online if anyone wishes to do so. I'm writing this before our ambitious Passiontide offering which I hope will have been a success!

Thanks again for your welcome and I look forward to writing many more of these in the coming years!

St Mary's Welcome Team – *Jenny Wiseman*

As I explained in last year's APCM report, there has not been a formal welcome "team" since before the Covid pandemic. I hope I'm not seeing our church community through "rose-tinted glasses" but believe that we are as a church family much more aware now of newcomers and those on their own at any of our events – be they worship based or social. It is not at all uncommon for me to be introduced to new people and also to be asked if I know who someone is at a service or a social event.

Crucially, we are all aware of the average age of our church family. So it is lovely to see the reactions and responses to the children and young people who attend our church or sing with the choir.

As I wrote last year if anyone feels that we should go back to having a more formal and identified "Team", then do please talk to me with your ideas of how this might work.

St Mary's Walking Group – *David and Louise Hughes*

Let's begin with a big thank you to those who offered and those that allowed themselves to have their arm twisted to lead a walk last year. They were;

January - Barry Northrop - The Elephant & Castle, Amwell, Wheathamstead (Very muddy and some singing)

February - Keith Creasey - Bengeo and the river Rib valley. Lunch at The Millstream pub, Hertford.

March - Louise Hughes - her default walk over Linces Farm to Ayot Mounfitchet and back to Welwyn.

April - Jane Carr - The Ayots ending at the Red Lion, Digswell Hill.

May - Hyacinth & Louise - walked between Digswell and Tewin. Lunch at the Cowper Arms, Digswell.

June - Dom & Joany Cox - Welwyn Garden City and Sherrards Park Wood. Lunch at the Red Lion, Digswell Hill. Delicious homemade flapjacks.

July - Louise Hughes - Heartswood Forest. Lunch at the Elephant & Castle, Amwell.

August - New member Anne Lloyd - Knebworth Park to Graffridge Wood and back to the Lytton Arms, Old Knebworth. We asked walkers to be sponsored by family and friends for this walk to help with fund raising for St Mary's. A very worthwhile £1,360 was raised.

September - Louise Hughes led her default walk described above. Lunch at the Rose & Crown, Welwyn.

October - Mary Bentley - Brocket Hall estate and Cromer Hyde. Started and finished at The Sun, Lemsford. Very nice lunch.

November - Barry Northrop's second led walk - Bulls Green to Datchworth and Harmer Green. Lunch at The Horns, Bulls Green.

December - no walk planned - too close to Christmas.

We welcome new members to the group, especially those who would be prepared to lead a walk. There are plenty of walks to choose from, described in detail on the Hertfordshire Walkers website that can be downloaded to your mobile phone that can then be used to provide directions for the walk on the day (usually the third Monday of the month except December).

Please contact me if you are interested in joining this group at louiseelhughes37@gmail.com

Time for Reflection – *Mavis Francis*

We have had a very interesting year with good attendance. In September after discussion, we decided to give the group a new name so instead of Time for God we are now Time for Reflection. This hopefully will attract people who don't usually attend Church services. Our programme has included a talk on the poem Desiderata; a flower demonstration with reference to flowers in the Bible; a talk about the Jewish traditions; a visit to the Coptic Church and talks on Jonathan Livingstone Seagull and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and a film about Ignatius the martyr. The Lent Course was enjoyed by a weekly average of 14 participants. Summer and Christmas sessions were concluded with Bring and Share lunches.

The Welwyn with Woolmer Green Magazine – *Rita McNeil*

150+ YEARS OLD and still going strong!

The ever-popular Magazine continues to provide fascinating articles on events, buildings, history, businesses, Parish news and personalities.

Depending upon each month's submission and approval of articles it endeavours to bring an even mix of church and village articles.

Its revenue annually brings much needed /essential funds for our churches – this year supplementing higher energy and running costs.

After many years of devoted service to the Magazine, Sue Muncer and Helen Thompsett have recently 'retired'. Our huge thanks to them both for their cheerful and dedicated work.

The current team is not getting any younger and would appreciate hearing from anyone who would be willing to assist with delivery, and IT skills.

Care Homes Ministry – Usha Hull

The ministry for care homes is shared between Usha Hull at Monread Lodge and Knebworth Care Home; Reverend Christie Gilfeather at Heath Lodge and Autumn Vale; and Reverend David Munchin at Three Oaks. Services are held every month.

At Christmas we get together a team of volunteer carol singers when at each care home we hold a fun-filled service with not just carols but poems, jokes, and short readings. In 2023, the Christmas carol services were packed with residents, care home staff as well as volunteer singers. New volunteers are always welcome.

For more information, please contact Usha on usha.hull@me.com

St Mary's Drama Group – Usha Hull

Every year a core team of dedicated and hard-working people ensure the pantomime is a success, its sell-out performances raising thousands for charity. We begin to rehearse once a week from late summer. In 2023 all proceeds from the much-loved pantomime Aladdin Trouble, with four performances in November, went towards church funds to cover a deficit caused by rising energy costs. The group raised a total profit of £2,141.21.

New members who wish to join us will be warmly welcomed and there is always a need for both cast parts as well as for background roles such as in costumes and props. Bonds are created of fellowship, friendship and fun.

Apart from the pantomime, the Drama Group has been active in a variety of ways in the past, notably in dramatised readings from the gospel during Easter services.

To express an interest in the Drama Group please email Usha on usha.hull@me.com

Sunday Morning Coffee – Vernonne Allan

A large number of congregation and choir enjoy socialising after the 9.30 Sunday morning service over refreshments served in Church House.

It is very pleasing that currently enough people have come forward to fill our rota, so that each pair serves coffee, tea and biscuits six times a year. Huge thanks are due to them all, and to those who after long service have stepped back this year, especially Barry and Val Stedham. We also warmly welcome those who joined the rota this year so that we have regular cover every Sunday, now even on the tricky fifth Sunday of the month.

We have a few names on the reserve team but would welcome more willing to step up occasionally when needed. Training is always given to newcomers.

The congregation have been generous with putting coins in the pots this year: all the money raised goes towards Church funds. Thank you to all who help, to those who have supplied biscuits and to all who generously give donations for their tea and coffee. This is an important part of Sunday morning for many.

St Mary's book/card stall – Pat Brooks

The bookstall has a small selection of reasonably priced greetings cards and cards with biblical texts suitable for most occasions. There is also a small selection of Christian books and some books of local interest.

Orders for Christian books and daily Bible study notes (samples are available) can be placed by contacting Pat Brooks 01438 715811. All profits from the bookstall go to church funds.

St Mary's Evening Book Group – Wendy Lawrence

The St Mary's Evening Book Group meets at 8pm on the second Thursday of each month to discuss a book chosen by agreement. We have read a wide variety of books, both fiction and non-fiction. We gather in each other's homes, and we always have an interesting and thought-provoking evening. The group is open to all members of St Mary's. There are currently 13 members.

The St Mary's Afternoon Book Group – Joan Spruce

The group meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 2.30pm in Church House. We read mostly fiction, some recent publications, some classic novels, but sometimes we will read a biography or travel book. Some books are chosen from a list provided by the library, some are suggestions by members. We normally get our books from the library, we have to pay about £27.00 per year for this service, as a group. Some people use kindles or have their own copies. We usually have a stimulating discussion, sometimes we even agree! We have about 10 regular members at present, and I have received several inquiries about joining recently. In January we have a sociable meeting with lunch as we don't read a book over Christmas.

My telephone number is 01438 840821 and is on the back of the Welwyn Magazine.



**Draft Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church
Meeting of St Mary's, Welwyn with St Michael's,
Woolmer Green at Church House on Wednesday 3rd
May 2023**

Attendees

David Munchin (DM) chairman, Susan Keach (SK), Maggie Varco (MV), Stuart Jenkin (SJ), Diane Jenkin (DJ), Vernonne Allan (VA), Stuart Westley (SW), Joyce Davis, Jackie Davis (JD), Jenny Wiseman, Mavis Francis, Geoff Cummings (CG), Beth Bates, Rowena and Fiona McDonald, John Burnapp, Sue and John Wray, Christine Allday, Christie Gilfeather, Jane and Mike Smith, Daphne Skinner, Helen McKay, Mike and Gay Carpenter, Don Bell, Louise & David Hughes (Secretaries).

Apologies

Colin Hull (CH), Usha Hull, Stephen Jupp, Pat Brooks, Jane Bacon (JB), John Swift, Cliff and Dorothy Munn, Jasmine Martin, Alice Burnapp

Minute taker

Louise Hughes (LH)

Meeting 1 – Election of Churchwardens

Welcome and opening prayer

The chairman opened the meeting at 19:55 hrs with a summary of the agenda.

Election of churchwardens

Diane Jenkin was nominated by Gay Carpenter and seconded by Mike Carpenter. Stuart Westley was nominated by Marcia Khan and seconded by Joyce Davis.

There is a vacancy for a churchwarden at St Michael's.

Meeting 2 – The Annual Parochial Church Meeting followed the election of churchwardens

Chairman's opening remarks

During the meeting reference will be made to the agenda, the reports and the financial accounts.

Attendance and apologies for absence

As for meeting 1 above.

Review of minutes of APCM 23/05/2022

Approved by all including the correction addendum and signed by DM.

Matters arising

Joyce Davis asked to be de-listed as sidesperson.

Presentation of the electoral roll

Diane Jenkin reported that there were 256 on the electoral roll. Since then, one person had asked to be de-listed.

Lay members to the deanery synod

Elected as follows: -

Vernonne Allan – nominated by Diane Jenkin and seconded by Stuart Jenkin

Colin Hull – nominated by Don Bell and seconded by John Burnapp

Mavis Francis – nominated by Jenny Wiseman and seconded by Joyce Davis

Lay members to PCC.

The Chairman thanked Geoff Cummings who is standing down.

The following were duly elected: -

Georgina Beck - nominated by Sue Keach and seconded by Christine Allday

Maggie Varco - nominated by Don Bell and seconded by Diane Jenkin

Stuart Jenkin - nominated by Diane Jenkin and seconded by John Burnapp

Joan Shelley - nominated by Jenny Wiseman and seconded by Vernonne Allan

Helen McKay - nominated by Stuart Westley and seconded by John Burnapp

Christine Allday - nominated by Jackie Davis and seconded by Stuart Jenkin

Emmanuel Odiachi - nominated by Jackie Davis and seconded by Sue Keach

There remains one vacancy to be filled.

DM thanked members for their service to the PCC.

Sidespersons.

The list of sidespersons was unanimously approved. Joyce Davis to be de-listed as per her request.

Financial reports and

re-appointment of the independent examiner.

Printed copies were available at the meeting of the accounts and the 'How you can help' sheet identifying opportunities to increase income from donations.

The Treasurer, MV, gave a summary of her report and accounts covering St Mary's and St Michael's for 2022. Her report was unanimously approved as was the re-appointment of Chris Burton as the independent examiner of accounts

who has kindly provided his services free of charge. Hard copies of the report and accounts are available in church. It is also available on St Mary's and St Michael's websites. In order to reduce the projected £35K deficit for 2023 MV had prepared a 'How you can help' sheet outlining ways in which additional income from donations might be raised. Maggie thanked everyone who donates to both churches. Thanks also go to Jackie Davis who looks after the accounts at St Michael's, Stuart Westley, Beth Bates, Richard Carden, Geoff Cummings and Robin Whitten who all provide support.

Team Rector's report

Printed copy available at the meeting

The rector reported on the numerous activities that made up the life of St Mary's and St Michael's during 2022. At the beginning of the year the church was recovering from a new variant of Covid-19 but gradually 2022 marked the first time in two years in which churches and their activities were able to proceed more or less as normal. The exception being work with children and families which remains at a low level.

Great efforts were made to support Ukrainians throughout the year with special thanks to hosts.

Warm spaces and support for food banks were provided in both parishes to help those in need during the cost of living crisis.

Christie and Ryan Gilfeather, the new curates, were welcomed. They have had a good start to their ministry and are due to be ordained this summer in a service at St Mary's. Rob Milner the new Director of Music has brought new energy to the role, resuming junior choir and introducing new choral scholarships.

St Michael's welcomed the partnership with the Romanian congregation.

The Queen's platinum jubilee was celebrated and there was sorrow for her death later in the year.

Mary Westley retired as Head Teacher after two decades of outstanding service.

A concern this year is the anticipated deficit of £35K due to the extraordinary rise in the costs of running the parishes. Suggestions were made as to how income might be increased to pay for those costs, supported by our excellent treasurer, Maggie.

The rector thanked all the PCC for their hard work during the year in supporting the life and work of the church, its finances and buildings, particularly Maggie, Diane, Jackie the Stuarts and Sue, who has been a wonderful warden at St Michael's, but has now retired.

The rector reminded the meeting that the most important ministry of all is prayer.

Beth Bates suggested putting the offertory plate out at baptism services. In response Jenny Wiseman suggested asking Linda Dobbs for her opinion of this as some baptism visitors feel awkward.

Other primary reports included in the APCM booklet 2023 are

- i) PCC secretaries' report – no queries.
- ii) Welwyn Hatfield deanery synod report – no queries.
- iii) Team council report – no queries
- iv) St Mary's fabric report – no queries
- v) St Mary's safeguarding report – DM reminded the meeting that concerns that were raised were all reported but no official action has been required.
- vi) St Michael's Church report – no queries

The primary reports were approved by all.

Other reports included in the APCM booklet 2023

There were no queries on this section of the reports which summarises the important work of the various activity groups of both churches.

Any other business

- i) A vote was taken on the manner in which communion should take place at St Mary's – with or without the communion rails. It was decided to reinstate the rails to allow for communicants to kneel as pre Covid-19 but standing to be allowed when preferred.
- ii) JW requested that the enormous candle be moved to allow better access to the flower cupboard. This was agreed.
- iii) JW asked whether, after Easter, the cross could be placed behind the curtain in the chancel. It had been left out with the intention of oiling it.
- iv) SW thanked DM for the play and praise that is going strong.

Closing prayer

The grace was said by all and the chairman closed the meeting at 21:05.

Thank yous

Throughout the meeting there were many thank yous and expressions of appreciation for work done by the rector, his team, members of the PCC and activity groups, committee work and all who contribute to the work of the two churches. These were all appreciated but are too numerous to itemise in these minutes.