

ST MARY'S CHURCH HADLOW

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING FOR THE YEAR 2021

To be held on

Sunday 24th April 2022, 11.45 a.m. in St Mary's Church

Documents for the meeting*:

Agenda for the 2022 APCM, p.3

Minutes of Previous APCM Meeting, held 25 April 2021, p.4

Churchwardens', committee and other reports for 2021, p.9

* The Annual Report and Accounts for 2021 are available separately (see p.3).

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ST MARY'S CHURCH, HADLOW ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 25th April 2021, 11.30 a.m. in
St Mary's Church, Hadlow

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 25th April 2021
3. Election of TWO (2) Churchwardens
(Two churchwardens to be chosen in accordance with the Churchwardens' Measure 2001)
4. Election of ONE (1) parochial representative of the laity to the Deanery Synod
5. Election of up to THREE (3) parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council
6. The appointment of an Independent Examiner
7. PCC statement on the appointment of Sides Persons
8. Report on the Electoral Roll (a copy of the Roll is available for inspection)
9. Adoption of The Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC, the activities of the Parish generally and the Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2021
10. The Churchwardens' Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church*
(in accordance with Section 5 of the Care of Churches & Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1999)
11. Report on the proceedings of the Paddock Wood Deanery Synod*
12. Reports of the activities of the sub-committees of the PCC*:
 - a. Education;
 - b. Fabric;
 - c. Finance;
 - d. Outreach and Fundraising;
 - e. World Mission
13. Reports on other areas of the life of the Parish*:
 - a. Anna Chaplain, Bell Ringers; Brass Cleaning; Church Cleaning; Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots; Kibakwe Link; Messy Church; Music; Newsletter Delivery; Parish Visiting; St. Mary's Flowers; St. Mary's Hospital Car Service
14. A churchwarden's reflections

* Reports for items 2 and 10 to 13 follow in this APCM booklet. The 2021 Annual Report & Accounts (item 9) is available from the St.Mary's website at www.stmaryshadlow.org.uk. There is a sign-up sheet at the back of church If you would like a paper copy.

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of St Mary's Church, Hadlow held 25 April 2021

Held in Church on Sunday 25th April 2021

In the Chair:

Rev'd Paul White, Vicar

Minutes taken by:

Martin Massy, PCC Secretary

1. Members present

Rev'd Paul White, Vicar (PW, Chair)

Officers of the current PCC: Michael Payne, Churchwarden (MP), John Speed, Churchwarden (JS) and Martin Massy, PCC Secretary and Treasurer (MM).

Plus xx members present in church and watching via Zoom.

Apologies were received from: Vera Godsall.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 25th October 2020

The minutes of the 2020 APCM held Sunday 25 October 2020 were approved by unanimous vote.

3. Election of Churchwardens

Nominations had been received for Michael Payne and John Speed, who were declared elected.

4. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Based on the Electoral Roll, the Church Representation Rules specify the PCC should have 12 elected representatives of the laity. Two members of the PCC came to the end of their terms of office, Julia Miles and Nicola, and we thank them very much for their valuable contributions to the PCC and to the work of the Church in the local community.

Nominations were received for Cathy Brill and Mike Harvey, who were duly declared elected.

5. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod

One nomination was received to fill the remaining vacancy for a deanery synod representative; Barry Wheeler was declared elected.

6. Appointment of Sides Persons

MP thanked our current Sides Persons, who play such an important role in making people feel welcome when they come to church, and asked whether they would be willing to serve again.

7. Report on the Electoral Roll (A copy of the Roll is available for inspection)

MM thanked David Lear, who acted again as our Electoral Roll Officer. One person left the parish, and another was added to the Electoral Roll, which therefore remains at 135, of whom 93 are resident in the parish, and 42 are non-resident but worship regularly at St.Mary's.

8. Adoption of The Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC, the activities of the Parish generally and the Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2020

The Annual Report and Financial Statements for the calendar year 2020 were approved by the PCC on 15 March, and were available on the church website. MM thanked all those people whose contributions had made it happen. Particular thanks to Linda Yabsley for coordinating production of the APCM booklet and to David and Gabrielle Lear for their hard work in preparing the accounts.

MM summarised the accounts by saying that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact income, both because we were unable to hold fund-raising events and lower collections.

Nevertheless, we had a surplus of £4,305 for the year, mainly because of a smaller contribution to the diocese as our parish offer. The parish offer is meant to cover the cost of ministry, plus services provided by the diocese to parishes and its wider mission, which includes supporting ordinands and curates. Our contribution during 2020 covered only the cost of ministry and part of diocesan support costs. We continued to minimise expenditure during the year, but most costs are unavoidable, e.g., insurance, maintenance.

MM reported that planned giving was holding up well, and thanked all those who were continuing to support St.Mary's financially.

MM also thanked Duncan Murray and John Speed for their support throughout the year – Duncan for book-keeping using the Xero accounting software, and John for managing our claims for Gift Aid. As before, we have been very fortunate in having help from Gabrielle and David Lear on all things accounting; grateful thanks to them too.

9. The appointment of an Independent Examiner

MM proposed that David Stephens be re-appointed as Independent Examiner. The motion was carried unanimously.

10. The Churchwardens' Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church

In presenting our report for the year 2020, which can be found on page twelve of the agenda pack, John and I would like to highlight our thanks to all of you for your help and understanding in keeping services at St Mary's proceeding in a safe way for all of us when we have been allowed into Church during the last year.

It is through everyone's cooperation in signing in, sanitising and mask wearing that we have been able to resume worship safely and indeed many of the changes that have had to be made are now mainly routine. That said John and I realise that this has been particularly frustrating for sidesmen and women, who have not been able to assist in the usual way, and we are looking at ways we may slowly be able to invite the occasional person to assist us, in the same way that slowly other aspects of Church life such as flowers and music are returning in a safe way.

With regard to the Church fabric our thanks go to the newly convened Fabric Committee under Martin's guidance. John and I particularly wish to thank the bell ringing team, not just for their measured return to the tower, but also for the splendid redecoration and carpeting of the ringing chamber itself. Also, our thanks to Christine Davis for restoring the kneelers.

The reordering of the Church, though still with fewer chairs, has, by reopening the occasional vestry, meant we can now safely accommodate around sixty people in the congregation once again, together with the choir and this means we no longer have to book to come to Church. The relocation of the foodbank reopens the area around the font for baptisms but still means that this vital part of our outreach is visible to all and now has step free access. By labelling items it is hoped that where shortages arise, they will be more obvious, as will those items where supplies are not currently required.

Finally, John and I wish to thank those who have made services possible; particularly from a technical perspective Annabelle and above all, from a leadership and worship perspective, both Paul and Christopher. We look forward to a year supporting an exciting new chapter for the life of St Mary's and our community. Thank you also from me to my colleague John; he is the one who really does all the work!

Michael Payne 25 April 2021

11. Other Reports

PW noted that reports on all other areas of church life were in the documents available from the church website.

12. The Vicar's reflections

A quick reminder that the APCM that took place last October was in relation to the year which ended in December 2019. This meeting relates to the year which ended in December 2020, the year of Covid.

Whilst there are things to be thankful for, and I shall come to those, we should also be honest with ourselves: 2020 was a tough year for everyone. Nationally over 150,000 have died and around the world 3 million have died of Covid. Many more are suffering from long Covid, including people we know from this congregation.

People were shut-in for months, businesses closed and millions put on furlough. The education of our children was disrupted hugely. There has been physical, psychological and economic damage which, I suspect, we have hardly begun to count.

And, of course, our churches were not immune to that disruption.

When the national lockdown was announced in March our congregational life was also suspended, which is understandable. Unfortunately, this diocese went even further than most, and wrote to all priests to inform us that to even enter our own church buildings, on our own to pray or stream services, could make us subject to disciplinary action. So not only were our churches shut but we were shut out of our churches at our time of greatest crisis.

At the point of the first national lockdown, I was three weeks into my Sabbatical and rapidly losing hope of getting to Africa. I met with the churchwardens and Nicky and it was agreed that Nicky would stream services from her home which she did with aplomb. She also worked closely with the parish council in relation to the use of the food bank and our huge thanks go to her.

Of course, not only was our normal worship life suspended but so were all the other parts of our life which have been so valuable in recent years – Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots, Messy Church and everything else.

On 1 June, I returned from my locked-down Sabbatical and Nicky went onto a 3-month placement at Watlington, Mereworth and West Peckham. We moved our worship life onto Zoom, streamed from my repurposed study – The Chapel of Our Lady of the Blessed Webcam – and we all gradually learnt when and how to unmute ourselves and continued to grow into what it meant to be a dispersed and online Christian community.

Had Covid happened only a few years earlier, before the widespread use of broadband internet, then goodness knows what we would have done. I have a friend who lives in Florence who said that the churches there simply closed their doors for months, because they could do nothing else, and the same is probably true in lots of other parts of the world. Whilst online worship is far from perfect, and it does exclude those who can't work the technology at least we were able to do something, for which we should be grateful.

Eventually we moved to streaming from church and this included Kelly & Francesca leading two services for us during August, both learning new skills that none of us have been taught at theological college.

In September, we managed to get back into church, albeit with limited numbers and having to cope with online ticketing – an anathema in many ways, but a necessary one.

In October I was delighted to attend Nicky's licensing as Vicar of Marden, and to send her off with the prayers, blessings and thanks of this whole parish.

Much of the Autumn was a rather confusing picture of shifting local lockdowns and usually big events such as Harvest, Remembrance Sunday and even our Christmas celebrations were all muted. And then, of course, in January we were closed again until Easter, but that is another story, for next year's APCM.

For those of us born after the Second World War I think it is uncontroversial to say that 2020 was the most challenging year since the war and at least one older person has said to me that they preferred it during the war because at least you could see the enemy and understood the danger.

If admitting that you have a problem is the first step to recovering from it then we should not be afraid to say that 2020 was a problem.

But there is still much to be grateful for.

First and foremost, and against many odds, we have largely hung together as a church. We are all a bit older and a bit more haggard than we were, some of us are in the building and some of us are online but we are still gathering together around word and sacrament week by week.

Of itself that demonstrates that our coming to church goes much deeper than habit, because if we wanted to break that habit there has been plenty of opportunity. It also demonstrates that it is possible to strip away much of what we have taken for granted as part of worship but still worship.

I have spoken in the past about priests celebrating the eucharist in the gulags using primitive vessels and whispering the words and the church survives – much can be stripped away and still Christ is at the centre, in fact even life itself can be stripped away and we are reminded that we are a church built not on earthly success but on death and resurrection.

And we should also be grateful that we have turned something of a corner and we do now have an opportunity to resurrect the life of St Mary's. Which, in a sense, brings me to the most important thing I have to say at this meeting. We now have a once in a generation opportunity to think about how we rebuild the worship life of St Mary's.

Do we want to make the church exactly as it was in 2019? If the answer to that is 'yes' then we will need people to step forward to fulfil all the roles we need. Just thinking about our team of altar servers, some have now retired through age, two are now churchwardens and therefore otherwise engaged and Kelly, Olivia and Jack either have moved on or will shortly be doing so. So if we want to have cross and candles and servers then we shall need volunteers. Similarly with all the other areas of church life which we took for granted, if we want to re-create the church that we had then people will need to gradually emerge and re-engage and rebuild.

But the answer may also be 'no', we want to do things a bit differently or perhaps very differently.

The events of 2020 have given us carte blanche to look at our church life and decide what to keep, what to change and what to let go. But this is not a job just for me. During the course of 2021 the churchwardens, the PCC and the whole congregation need to become involved in thinking about those questions and laying the groundwork for what the church of 2022 and beyond will look like.

Quite what that process will involve I don't yet know, as we have not had that discussion with the new PCC. But there may be a case for asking an external consultant to come and sit with us and chair those discussions.

But we should be excited by these possibilities – because we either rebuild the church and the worship that we have been used to, in which case we may learn to cherish it more, or we can build something more tailored – not tailored to our needs and desires but tailored to growing the church and serving our community going forward.

So, members of the PCC, your first collective task is to help me start that process.

I would normally end my reflection by thanking people.

After wrestling with this for some time I have decided not to do that this year.

That is not because there are not lots of people deserving of huge thanks. There are. Lots of people in this room and also online and elsewhere this morning have gone above and beyond the call of duty numerous times during 2020, and continue to do so. People have taken on all sorts of tasks that they never signed up for, furniture and food banks have been moved more than once, and no two weeks have been quite the same. As years go it has often been Herculean just to keep things going and we are only here and functioning because of lots of people all doing a great deal of work. But once I start naming names (following on from my sermon this morning) there is the ever-present danger of missing out just one person or group and, this year in particular, I don't dare do that.

So, I am deeply thankful to you all and for all everyone did to get us through 2020, I am thankful that we are here, and my deepest prayer is that in 100 years time the congregation of St Mary's will look back on these times as we might do to the wars, and just be thankful that we got through and kept the faith.

As I said at the end of my last but one APCM reflection - this is a good place, filled with good people, and there is no doubt that God is at work in this community. We must treasure that and not take it or each other for granted.

God bless, Rev'd Paul

The meeting closed with The Grace

Signature

Date: 25 April 2021

REPORTS FOR THE YEAR 2021

Agenda Item 10: Churchwardens' Report for the year 2021

2020 had been the year of lockdown and like none other within living memory for the life of St Mary's Church. 2021 by contrast was a year set against the backdrop of the resurgent pandemic. Covid precautions and the on off interruptions to everyday life prevailed. Most people had individual concerns if not actual illness or worse. Then, if that was not enough, Hadlow's own vicar announced that he would be moving on. We should note our thanks to the Revered Paul White for his service to our Church over the last decade. Hence all in all 2021 went by in a bit of a blur.

Hadlow, however, is a special place and its people are not only compassionate, but they are also very resilient. These two qualities bode well for the future. Indeed, it is the members of St. Mary's Church themselves that are to be thanked for the outcome of last year itself.

Not only have John and I had the burdens of our role lifted by your support, but we have also been guided by a full complement of able individuals who bring a full range of talents to the table at our PCC. Furthermore, we have vibrant committees and leadership shown by their convenors. This has led to as full a diary of services and events as has been possible within the circumstances.

Before the search for our new vicar could begin, we had to await the appointment of a new Archdeacon for Tonbridge. The fact that the Diocese itself was also without a Bishop meant we were in good company! Meanwhile certain things had to be done and John & I divided up the duties accordingly. He generously took on the task of recruiting locum clergy and to fill the calendar with a complete set of Eucharistic services. These included both 8am and 10am on Sundays and 9:30am on Wednesdays. More administrative tasks including the care and repair of the vicarage, which also became the responsibility of the Parish, fell into my jurisdiction. Services have continued to be live streamed at 10am on Sunday mornings and for this we are indebted to the assistance received from Gill Speed and Viv Wickham.

We would especially like to thank Janice Massy for her work not only as Parish Administrator, working to organize rotas for various teams in church and coordinating all the administration around services. But she is also the convenor of the fundraising and outreach committee which still continued to operate activities very difficult times. Sometimes organizing events with only a few weeks' notice. Our thanks to Janice and her entire team.

We are pleased to report that the fabric of our beautiful Church currently remains substantially in good order mainly thanks to the Fabric Committee under the leadership of our Treasurer, Martin Massy.

The continuing generosity of our parish has been evident in the way that the Hadlow Foodbank was supported during the year. Our thanks must go to the new convenor of the Mission committee, Alison Middleton, who now leads on this work.

Slowly, as the return to Church evolved, some old customs were also able to start again. Not least amongst these has been the reintroduction of our marvellous team of Sidesmen who show the wonderful welcome to all that St. Mary is justly proud to offer. There is once again no separate Sidesman's Report this year, but we wish to thank all those who have either remained on call or started assisting once again. They include Bet Brett, Claire Walter, Gill Speed, Jenny Hopkins, Annie Young, Kirsty Finch, Carol Bramham, Mags Skelton, Lee Kirk, and Anne Hughes. Anne also continued to act as our Verger throughout the year kindly assisted by Liz Davies.

Cathy, Kelly, Education committee and the team involved with Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots have worked hard over the last year to find ways of encouraging and supporting our young people to return to Church. This has included services such as Messy Church, Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots, and Sunday groups. It has been tough times for all these teams, but our thanks must go to these people for their perseverance and dedication.

We should also record our thanks to the many other individuals who by their contributions have made our task as Churchwardens much less onerous than it would otherwise have been. Our thanks also go to all those on cleaning rotas, including brasses, and the flower arranging team, musicians, and bellringers.

There is though one other person who has played a very important role in the life of our Church, both during the pandemic and now during the interregnum. That person is of course Revd. Christopher Miles who goes far beyond the call of duty in his retirement in his assistance to us all. We are also fortunate to have had the support of Jenny Hopkins our Anna Chaplain who has started and maintained several new activities for the older members of our congregation as well as organising Home Communion in very difficult times. Finally, we must acknowledge the work of our marvellous Ordinand, Kelly Parsons. Kelly alongside working and studying, has given up a lot of her time to assist with young people's work and services, including several services around Christmas, including Christmas Day itself.

Thank you everyone and may we wish you all the very best for the year ahead.

Michael Payne & John Speed, 14 March 2022

Agenda Item 11: Deanery Synod Report

With the departure of Val Newell as St Mary's Deanery Rep in August 2021, Hadlow's representatives on St Mary's PCC are now Mike Harvey (Treasurer and Lay Chairman) and Barry Wheeler. A sign of the times dictated by the on-going Covid pandemic has meant less than a handful of meetings have been held and these have been via Zoom, led by Area Dean Rev Andrew Axon. Mike and Barry have attended where possible,

Various topics were discussed including being 'Mission Minded', food banks, events for young people and the White Ribbon campaign to do with Violence against Women, personnel changes and, at the July 14 meeting, training needs for 2022.

Regarding the Covid limitations for Services suggested by the Church of England, it was unanimously agreed that the Deanery would put forward the proposal that the use of disposable individual cups for Communion should be forwarded to General Synod for discussion.

Barry Wheeler, January 2022

Agenda Item 12: PCC Committee Reports

Education Committee

This has been a difficult year again, when for months it has been difficult for groups to meet in person. During Holy Week, there was a children's hunt for symbols of the Passion around the village. Kelly led a Zoom Lent course based on 'The Nail' by Stephen Cottrell.

The Sunday groups operate flexibly, in response to attendance on any particular day. Those running the groups have to be ready to fit prepared material to the individuals who turn up. Continuity is difficult to achieve, so we have to make the most of opportunities as they arise.

Cathy Brill, February 2022

Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee met three times during 2021. Most of the issues raised by the 2018 Quinquennial report have been addressed. Routine maintenance was carried out on the fabric (roof and guttering), the organ and humidifier, and all portable appliances; fire extinguishers were serviced by a specialist company. An asbestos survey, recommended by the Quinquennial inspection, identified the presence of asbestos, particularly in the soffits on the south side of the roof. We invited two companies to submit proposals for renewing lighting in church – the high-level lights in the nave, for example, are obsolete and spares are difficult to find – and plan to advance the lighting design during 2022.

The Fabric Committee comprises Anne Hughes, Duncan Murray, Martin Massy (Convenor), Maurice Wong, Michael Payne, Richard Hopkinson, Stephanie Ingham, Steve Newell (part year).

Martin Massy, February 2022

Treasurer's Report

A report on the financial situation forms part of the 2021 annual report and accounts. I am very grateful to have the help and support of the finance team, especially Duncan Murray and John Speed, and of David and Gabrielle Lear who help enormously with payroll, accounting advice and preparation of the accounts. John does an invaluable job claiming Gift Aid, which contributed over £11,000 to unrestricted income in 2021 (15% of the total).

The weekly envelope scheme has been discontinued because the envelopes cost over £90 per year. Several people have switched to a regular Standing Order (thank you!), which helps us with counting and banking (no need!), and planning. Ideally, however, we would now like people to give via the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS), which was introduced in Rochester diocese towards the end of 2021 (the PGS was first established in 2014). The PGS doesn't cost us anything and simplifies administration since it claims Gift Aid on our behalf. It is a direct debit scheme with the usual guarantees, and registration is straightforward, either online or by telephone. Talk to me, Martin Massy, if you would like more information. Gift Aid is an important source of income; if you have not yet completed a Gift Aid form for St.Mary's and would like to please contact John Speed or Martin Massy.

A Stewardship campaign reminded people that God loves a generous giver, which can be financial or one's time and skills. The campaign had modest success, with several people increasing their contributions very generously and some others setting up Standing Orders for the first time.

Thank you to all our donors; without you it would not be possible to fulfil our aim of "promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical" as well as we would like (see objectives of the PCC in the annual report). Thank you again.

Martin Massy, Hon. Treasurer, February 2022

Outreach & Fundraising Committee

Last year Outreach and Fundraising activities continued to be affected by the ongoing lockdowns due to Covid. However, like many organisations that could not meet in person, we took advantage of our new-found familiarity with live streaming to hold a number of events on Zoom. In the early months of the year we enjoyed a fascinating Zoom breakfast talk by Vanessa Bird on the relationship between art and science, a well-attended Zoom quiz evening and a fun evening of Zoom Scattergories.

But the prolonged lockdown made us realise just how important being able to socialise in person is for the well-being and cohesion of the church family – particularly for those of us who do not

have the means to connect on-line. Just before Easter we organised a home delivery of home-made soup to the senior members of St Mary's. In normal years, we often share a simple meal of soup and bread at our Lent Course. The home-delivery reminded our members that, despite our isolation, we are still all part of the church community.

From Easter things gradually opened up so by September we felt confident enough to hold our biennial Scarecrow Trail. Thanks to Kirsty for organising such a great community-wide event. It was a joy to see the spectacular creations by individuals and organisations who took part, and to see so many people – particularly families – walking around the village.

A concert followed in October. Local schoolteacher Rebecca Hooper, who is a professionally trained soprano, together with her friends and accompaniment by Francis Griffiths, gave a packed church an evening of first-rate music – plus an unforgettable opportunity to sing along to the Hippopotamus Song.

Also in October, our Anna Chaplain Jenny Hopkins started her twice monthly Seniors' Coffee Mornings which have grown in popularity. Following Jenny's lead, in November we re-started the monthly Saturday Coffee mornings on the second Saturday of each month.

Our final big event of the year was the Christmas Fair. We had Father Christmas, elves, bells and a great variety of stalls. So many people from the village and church turned up and supported us – and had a great time!

Not to be forgotten, though, is the Hadlow Newsletter. It is a treasured demonstration of outreach and service to the village by St Mary's and it continued to be produced, folded and delivered to most of the homes in the parish throughout the year. An amazing task thanks to the work of editor Lesley Bright and the organising talent of Anne Hughes who oversees the distribution together with her team of folders and deliverers. Anne would always welcome more volunteers to the convivial monthly Thursday morning folding sessions in the Upper Room, but more pressing is the need for some extra help to cover some roads in the village that are without their own deliverer.

Janice Massy, Outreach & Fundraising Committee Convenor

World Mission Committee

The World Mission Committee ceased to be active during early 2021 at the suggestion of Rev'd. Paul White. Previously it had provided a forum for liaison with organisations supported by the parish, for example Delhi Brotherhood and the Kibakwe link, and promoted fund raising for them. It had also raised awareness in the congregation of issues relating to the Anglican Communion and the worldwide church and made recommendations to the PCC on charities to be supported, such as through special collections.

The role of the World Mission Committee has currently been taken on by the PCC, however, it is hoped in time that it will be re-established alongside other Mission work now being undertaken including the Hadlow Foodbank.

Michael Payne, February 2022

Agenda Item 13: Reports from other areas of the Parish

Report from the Anna Chaplain

I feel very privileged to serve St Mary's Church as the Anna Chaplain working with the Senior Members of our church. During 2021 as Anna Chaplain I have been involved in the following areas of church life:

Seniors' coffee morning - held each month on 1st and 3rd Fridays at 10.30. We have about ten regulars who enjoy the opportunity to chat to others. We would be pleased to see others join us.

Home Communion and Parish Visiting – this re- started in September 2021. Anyone wishing to be visited or to have Home Communion please contact Jenny on 852386. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of our Visiting and Home Communion teams for their faithful service.

Café Plus, which has recently started up again. Attendees are busy making flags and bunting to decorate the church for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

Jenny Hopkins, February 2022

Hadlow Bell Ringers

2021 began with the bells of St Mary's silent due to Covid. They continued that way until Easter when, at the request of the Vicar, we started ringing again on Easter Sunday. At this time, following rules from the Central Council for Church Bell Ringers, we could only ring two bells and ringers had to be from the same household.

In April we tolled to mark the death of the Duke of Edinburgh. When the rule of six was introduced in May, we were able to ring six of our bells and re-start our Wednesday practice nights. In June our regular quarter peals on the first Sunday of the month were re-introduced. When the rule of six was relaxed we were able to ring all eight of our bells once again and practices have returned to normal with visitors from other towers supporting our practice. We have also put on two additional practices on a Saturday morning to help our ringers progress in their method of ringing.

In addition to our regular ringing, the bell ringers enjoy other events. In October the band had its first ringing outing for two years, taking in just two towers, East and West Malling, finishing up with a pub lunch. We rang handbells at the Christmas fair in church. We rang for two weddings at St Mary's and supplied ringers for weddings at Nettlestead church.

Looking to the future, though, if we are to continue to maintain the very high standard of ringing that we have at Hadlow we do need to recruit new ringers. If there is anyone who would like to learn, we would be very happy to teach them.

Janice Massy, February 2022

Church Brass Cleaning

When things became more 'normal' in church during 2021, it appeared that there were only two people left on the Brass Rota, despite appeals for more help. Judy Gater, who had organised the rota for many years, retired, and it was therefore decided that Carole Bramham and Linda Moore would clean the brass in the church approximately every two months, rather than it being done once a fortnight. If this is acceptable to the PCC and congregation, we will continue in this manner for the time being. (A suggestion was made to Michael Payne, Churchwarden, that the brass be lacquered but, in his professional view, that was not a worthwhile procedure as it did not last for long and caused more problems than it solved).

Linda Moore, February 2022

Church Cleaning

Church cleaning still goes on and thanks to all who are involved. As usual we could do with more help. We work in pairs - that doesn't mean you need to be there at the same time but when it is

convenient for you. If anyone feels they could help I'm at church most Sundays when I could tell you what is involved or you can reach me on 01732 369817.

Ann Jenner, February 2022

Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots

The shadow of Covid restrictions again fell on our ability to open the doors of the church to welcome mums, dad, grandparents, babies and children in the early months of 2021. We all missed the fellowship and support we shared and the privilege of watching the children grow. However, during the autumn, we started to meet again on Wednesday mornings. We were delighted to see returning families and to greet some new friends. Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots meets in church on Wednesday mornings from 10.30 – 12.00 throughout the year. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment where parents and other carers can meet informally while their babies and small children play. Tea, coffee, and biscuits are provided for a small donation. Every week, there is a simple craft activity and we finish with a musical session of action songs and musical instruments. Many of the families who attend make firm friendships which benefit both adults and children, and extend beyond the weekly meetings in church.

The group is run by a group of volunteers including Cathy Brill, Carole James, Jim and Pippa May, Val Newell and Jemimah Spalding. Also, Father Christmas, who distributed presents at our party.

Cathy Brill, February 2022

Hadlow-Kibakwe Parish Link

The on-going Covid pandemic has continued to affect St Mary's link with Kibakwe. Covid restrictions in the U.K. prevented or curtailed a lot of church activities including development of our Kibakwe link. Nevertheless, we have maintained, via WhatsApp, limited contact with the recently appointed link coordinators in Kibakwe. However, WhatsApp is not the best medium to grow a relationship between two parties who have not met and in a language that is not their first nor probably even their second. Although the link is alive, we have not been able gather any recent news of the projects started in Kibakwe but hope they are still running. Perhaps 2022 will be the year when we will be able to travel and visit safely to see how our projects have fared and what new projects we could usefully fund. We have some £1,700 available for water and lighting projects.

Jim May, February 2022

Messy Church

Messy Church provides a new way of worship for church members and an exciting outreach opportunity. Although we were not able to run as many sessions as usual this year, we have explored Saying Thank You (the Ten Lepers), Messy Christingle and Messy Candlemas. Every craft activity is linked to a theme and stimulates discussion connected to a Bible story. We finish with a short act of worship followed by the sharing of food. All ages are welcome. Although these sessions are run by a small team of regular volunteers, everyone from the congregation is invited to attend and experience this new way of exploring the Bible.

Music

This year has been a challenging one for Music at St. Mary's. Following the retirement of our Musical Director, Anthony Le Fleming, the choir and music in our worship was unofficially bequeathed to Michael Pound and myself, with some additional help from Will Pierce. Between us we navigated the choppy waters of singing with the varying Covid restrictions and guidelines. This proved to be something of a minefield, with restrictions of only six singers for a large part of the

year. What proved as much of a challenge was the necessity of being socially distanced; self-evidently, singers need to be close together to sing effectively.

As usual we turned this into an opportunity; our music at this time was more intimate, more carefully crafted, with repertoires chosen to reflect the smaller numbers. It was an opportunity for members of the choir and Michael and me to adapt, to upskill ourselves, and to serve in a slightly different way. The point of Music in worship has always been to serve and support, and we hopefully achieved this, albeit in a challenging context.

Christmas and the Carol Service came and went; a special 'shout out' goes to Francesca Vernon for her solo in Once in Royal David's City, to Sharon Vanns for steering the sopranos with her excellent Music GPS, and all who faithfully turned up week in and week out on Friday evenings; their loyalty is noteworthy and appreciated; (they have also been excellent at pointing out the many errors and anomalies perpetuated by myself, generally tactfully).

Michael and I are exceedingly privileged to serve our wonderful choir and to keep the fantastic choral tradition going here at St. Mary's. We look forward to another musically bountiful year!

Francis Griffiths, February 2022

Newsletter Delivery

Many thanks to all involved in the production and distribution of the newsletter, which keeps residents informed of church events, parish council news and the activities of local organisations. etc. Lesley compiles the newsletter, Janice prints it and there is a group of volunteers who do the folding and make up the bundles, plus about 40 people who deliver it door-to-door. Someone is needed to deliver to the area around Steers Place and to the new development in Carpenters Lane, when it is occupied, also other areas when the need arises. I would be glad to hear if anyone would be willing to take over from me to be in overall charge of deliveries. The folding is normally done on a Thursday morning towards the end of each month.

Anne Hughes, February 2022

Parish Visiting

For many years, our team of visitors have faithfully enjoyed time sharing cups of tea and conversation with the housebound and vulnerable. Since Covid, contact has been restricted to telephone calls and letters. We all look forward to resuming face-to-face visits as soon as this is safe. This is an enjoyable and worthwhile activity for team members and those visited alike.

Cathy Brill

St Mary's Flowers

After stuttering along with Covid regulations, it has been a joy to have beautiful flowers in church once more. A big thank you to the ladies on our flower rota, who always provide lovely arrangements.

Thank you also to those who donate to flowers in memory of loved ones at Christmas and Easter.

We would welcome anyone wishing to put flowers in church either to join our rota or even to place a one-off vase of flowers. If you are interested, please contact Carol Wickham 01732 851139

Carol Wickham, February 2022

St Mary's Hospital Car Service

During 2021 we completed 265 journeys, which compares with 210 in 2020, reflecting at least a partial return to 'normal' service for routine appointments by the NHS. Of these, 188 (71%) were for people not directly connected with St. Mary's. Some 'clients' need more appointments than others of course so, in 2021, we had a total of 47 clients (36 not directly connected with St Mary's), with 8 people needing 15 or more trips during the year. On average there were just over 5 appointments per week in 2021.

We had only 9 active drivers last year (11 in 2020), although inevitably this decreased to just 4 or 5 of us due to people having to self-isolate, and of course it goes without saying that without them the service could not exist. I am extremely grateful to all our drivers for their co-operation and willingness to spend time sitting in their cars at the various hospitals and medical centres. The drivers in 2021 were: Marie Dawes, Mike Harvey, Ann Jenner, Jim May, Linda Moore, Richard Morley, Duncan Murray, Val Newell and John Pierce.

I have been responsible for organising the Hospital Car Service for about four years now, and it has become ever clearer to me that this highly personal service is hugely appreciated and very much needed by the people of Hadlow & Golden Green (and beyond if they attend St Mary's). Please be in no doubt that this is very much part and parcel of the extended pastoral care which St Mary's offers to our parishioners, even if some of the drivers do not attend our church themselves.

Although we have been able to cope during the Covid-19 pandemic, I am always on the lookout for more drivers. If you are willing and able to give time between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm on weekdays (or at least some of them) and are interested in joining the Hospital Car Service as a driver, please do get in touch with me (01732 851881 or 07464 548448) for more information. I also look forward to seeing those drivers who have had to take a leave of absence returning to duties during 2022. It is an extremely rewarding job, as I am certain all of the drivers would agree!

Mike Harvey, February 2022