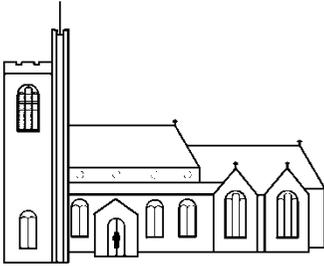


The Parish of
St Mary the Virgin, Welwyn
with St Michael and All Angels,
Woolmer Green



St Mary's, Welwyn



St Michael's, Woolmer Green

Annual Parochial
Church Meeting
(APCM)

Wednesday 29th April 2026
in Church House

Holy Communion – 7.15pm
Meeting Commences – 8.00pm

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NOTICE OF A MEETING FOR
THE
ELECTION OF
CHURCHWARDENS

A meeting of parishioners for the election of churchwardens will be held on Wednesday 29th April 2026 at 7:55 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Opening prayer.
2. Minutes of meeting held on 7th May 2025.
3. Election of churchwardens.

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) will be held on Wednesday 29th April 2026 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 7th May 2025.
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 – Helen McKay
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 2026 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 2026

Ex-officio: Clergy:

Nicola Jackson, William Ellis

Ex-officio: Church Wardens:

Diane Jenkin

Stuart Westley

Nita Gowans

Rachel Wadey

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 2025

Georgina Beck	End of Term
Stuart Jenkin - Fabric	End of Term
Joan Shelley	End of Term
Helen McKay	End of Term
Jackie Davis (WG) - Treasurer St Michael's	1 years to go
Crystal Lam	2 years to go
Liz Hesketh	2 years to go
Glynis Johnston	2 years to go

Twelve in total

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

Please consider putting your name forward to the Rector or the Church Wardens

Appointment of sidespersons for St Mary's church

Vernonne Allan
Peter Brattle
Martin & Liz Browne
Rose Cantillon Webber
Michael & Gay Carpenter
Clare Farrow
Geoff Cummings
Judith Hollands
Keith and Linda Norman
Diane Petty
Carole Trigg
Ann Harper
Keith Smythe

St Michael's Church sidespersons:

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

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*

Parochial Church Council Meetings continued to be held every other month during the past year.

At the start of meetings, a council member is chosen to write a summary of the meeting for The Welwyn Magazine.

We continued as joint secretaries to the PCC following the 2025 APCM. Our responsibilities include ensuring that the PCC follows correct procedures in accordance with the statute that governs the actions that all PCCs must adhere to, namely the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956.

The principal duties of the secretary includes issuing and posting notices of meetings in a timely manner, preparing the agenda for meetings, writing up the minutes of such meetings, doing their best to ensure that church activity group reports are prepared in time for the APCM booklet, dealing with correspondence, including from the diocese, answering requests for information that occasionally arise, keeping a check on the parish diary and knowing what is happening in the life of the churches generally.

Another key role is to record any resolutions of important decisions that are passed by the council, for example applying to the diocese for faculties (planning permission), changes within the accounts or to the church's banking arrangements.

The system we introduced last year of issuing the minutes of meetings in draft as soon as we are able rather than just in time for the next meeting has worked well as it gives the

opportunity for council members to inform us of any errors or omissions while the meeting remains fresh in their minds and enables us to correct the minutes in advance of the next meeting.

After meetings we save any documentation, including the agenda, the minutes and attendance list to Dropbox for future reference.

As you will know the Parochial Church Council is a charity and as such, we have a duty to keep the Charity Commission up-to-date with details of who the PCC members (who are therefore trustees of the charity) are and ensure those members have completed the necessary documentation for the Commission.

Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod Report

– *Vernonne Allan and Mavis Francis*

During 2025 the Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod met three times: in **March, June and October**. Each meeting included worship, fellowship, and discussion of matters affecting churches across the deanery.

A range of **guest speakers** contributed during the year. These included a presentation from *Single Friendly Churches*, encouraging churches to think about how welcoming and inclusive they are for single people; a talk reflecting on mission in the early church; and a speaker from *Resolve*, highlighting opportunities for fundraising and community engagement.

There were several **clergy changes and pastoral updates** shared across the year, including ordinations, new appointments, departures, and support for churches during vacancies and maternity leave. These updates helped parishes stay informed and pray for one another.

The Synod received updates on **Deanery and Diocesan matters**, including work on a proposed **Deanery Sunday**, the diocesan focus on **Growing Younger and More Diverse**, and progress with the **Alban Way Project** for young people aged 16–35.

Important **diocesan and national issues** were also discussed, such as the process for appointing a new Bishop of St Albans, Parish Share and parish finances, and matters arising from General Synod.

Safeguarding remains a key priority. Parishes were reminded to keep safeguarding as a regular PCC agenda item, follow safer recruitment guidance, and ensure good data protection practice.

Overall, Deanery Synod continues to provide a helpful forum for sharing information, supporting parishes, and encouraging collaboration across the deanery.

Team Council Report - *David Munchin*

The Team Council met on three occasions in 2026 – 19th February, 2nd July and 8th October

The Team Council consists of the Team Rector, representatives of the Ministry Team, 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 were identified in 2025

Safeguarding in the Welwyn Team Ministry

You will have heard in recent weeks of major failings within the Church of England, with regard to safeguarding practice and the care of victims after disclosures of abuse. It has been a time of deep shame and sorrow, and although painful to face, we hope will be a catalyst for greater transparency and accountability in the future. Our prayers are particularly with those who have suffered abuse at the hands of those who were trusted.

As clergy in this Welwyn Team of churches we want to pay tribute to the diligent and energetic work of our Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs), PCCs and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who support us in our commitment to ensure that these churches are places of safety and accountability. We realise that much of their work is unseen and thought at this time it might be useful to outline to you, our congregation and wider community, some of the procedures we have in place to help protect those in our care.

- We have five Parish Safeguarding Officers who act as a point for people to report concerns, and with the clergy share the responsibility of the oversight that safeguarding training and DBS checks are up to date.
- We have three Safer Recruiters (one clergy, two lay) who meet with and administer DBS checks for every PCC member and for those who volunteer to work with children or vulnerable adults.
- Safeguarding training is compulsory for clergy, Readers, churchwardens, PCC members and those who

work/volunteer with activities with children and vulnerable adults. This is offered online, and also run annually 'in house'

- Every PCC has a Safeguarding policy that is displayed in our churches and on our websites, along with contact details of the Incumbents, PSO and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
- Safeguarding is a standing item at every meeting of the PCC, Team Council and Ministry Team.
- We follow the national church guidelines with regard to safe practice e.g. ratios of adult to children, parental permission for activities and use of social media and photographs etc.
- Volunteers are provided with a Code of Conduct of expected behaviour whilst working with children and vulnerable adults, as well as clear details of how to report concerns about a child or the behaviour of another volunteer or member of the clergy.

Policies and procedures have their place, but most importantly, we believe, is the building of a culture in all our churches where every person feels an equal responsibility to ensure the safekeeping of others and can share concerns with the knowledge they will be handled proportionately, appropriately and with sensitivity and compassion. That is something we can all work towards.

Finally, we want to say thank you to all who take an active role on behalf of the church in caring for children, young people, the frail and housebound and those vulnerable in other ways. This is good and valuable work. Working together we endeavour to be places where all people are treated with dignity and care through which they might grow in the knowledge that they are precious in the sight of God.

St Mary's Fabric Report – *Stuart Jenkin*

St. Mary's Church Welwyn – Fabric Report to the APCM for the year ending 2025.

1. Heating

A new control system and rebalancing of the heating system in the church and church house was completed in the year. This also included the replacement of one of the main pumps and two secondary pumps that had failed. The system can now be operated via an app remotely.

2. The Northern Cemetery Wall

The wall that partly collapsed has been shored up by the Parish Council who are investigating a longer-term solution.

3. Communications

The boiler control system - Ubiquity is capable of handling other functions including telephones and CCTV. During the year fibre optic cable was installed and linked up to the new Wi-Fi system.

The phone in the office is now a VOIP phone run through Ubiquity. This has enabled the church to cancel the expensive BT contract for the broadband and landline phone and enter into new contracts with Sky Business for the provision of fast fibre and to enter into a contract with Ubiquity for the VOIP phone.

4. The following repairs/replacements have been carried out

New smart electricity meter

Repair of the auto flush in the men's toilets

Replacement of the lamp in the streetlight in the churchyard

Replacement of the external lighting timer

Replacement of faulty path light

Replacement of bulbs in church house uplighters

Repair of damaged flagstone in the church

Replacement of air extractor in the ladies toilet
Replacement of light and light fitting in the ladies toilet
Replacement of two failed fire extinguishers
Replacement of two failed emergency lights
Replacement of failed bulb in the main floodlight

5. Sustainability

The PCC is keen to explore initiatives wherever possible to strive to meet Net Carbon Zero requirements. For example, where possible we are now installing LED lighting.

6. Compliance

During the year the following have been completed

- ☑ Gas safety certificate for boiler
- ☑ Lighting 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

Electoral Roll Report – *Diane Jenkin*

The electoral figures for St Michaels are 46 and for St. Marys is 180. Total 226. The numbers are lower than last year due to sadly, the passing of several members of the congregation. However, new people are beginning to attend regularly at St Marys and when appropriate I will ask them to sign up to the parish register.

St Michael's Church, Woolmer Green Fabric Report –
Nita Gowans

Compliance – annual checks are up to date.

The Church was inspected and found 'free' of woodworm. LED lighting has been fitted to all interior church ceiling fittings.

A new CO2 fire extinguisher was advised and fitted to the kitchen area.

The organ pedalboard has been repaired.

A new water heater has been installed in the vestry.

A new sound system has been installed in the church.

The churchyard contractor is satisfactory to our requirements. Our volunteers continue to assist as and when required.

We await quotations for the provision of a new driveway after the approval and recommendation from a DAC visit.

We have received a request for a self-funded bench for the old churchyard.

Our own church cleaner has recently 'retired' from her post. The Romanian congregation continue to clean and tidy after their services.

No notification for a Rural Dean inspection was received in the Autumn.

After a second Quinquennial inspection visit we are still awaiting the report.

Church Wardens' Report, St Mary's, Welwyn

– *Diane Jenkin and Stuart Westley*

As always, this year has been a busy one for the Churchwardens. We have been involved in maintaining the smooth running of the church. We have supported the Rev Canon Dr David Munchin and other members of the clergy. Stuart Westley and I with the help of other church members have supported the Welwyn festival, fund raising, St. Marys, Sherrards and Tenterfield schools with their harvest festival and Christmas concerts. We have also assisted the visiting musicians and visitors that have attended the hugely successful Saturday concerts. As Churchwardens we have our fair share of paperwork but we are lucky to have Stuart Jenkin to assist by attending to all matters relating to the fabric. He will cover the details in his own report.

We both enjoy our role as Churchwardens and are very grateful for the support we receive from the clergy and congregation.

Church Wardens' Report - St Michael and All Angels,

Woolmer Green –

Nita Gowans and Rachel Wadey

Another busy year for our church in Woolmer Green, with some special occasions, some new faces and a slow but steady rise in numbers. We continue to be enthusiastic and optimistic about our place in the community. Our wonderful curates, Will and Nicky have brought imagination and contemplation to our Sunday services and special Easter, Anniversary, Patronal and Christmas celebrations. Sadly we shall be losing Will when, in the fullness of time, he moves on to his own parish. Nicky though, we are delighted to have staying with us. Details of her new position follow below.

One of our first undertakings as new Church Wardens was to oversee the provision of refreshments at the annual Village Day celebrations. We were blessed, once again, with sunshine, a strong band of willing volunteers (both on the day and beforehand with preparations) and a sturdy new gazebo courtesy of Gill and Simon Blewitt.

Our Autumn season was particularly busy. In September we provided a stopping point for the annual Bike and Hike – which happened to coincide with a wedding and the most tremendous thunderstorm. Thunder, lightning, hailstones and torrential rain all added to the Saturday! Later that month we celebrated our Patronal Festival with a special eucharist service including additional music and readings for Michaelmas. We marked a very special milestone with the 125 year anniversary of the consecration of our church and churchyard. Another excuse for a celebratory service – this time with a large birthday cake and even a couple of bottles of fizz. Harvest Festival was an enjoyable occasion where we were pleased to see some new faces at our family service and afterwards at our ‘Bring-and-Share’ lunch. Finally, as we started to think about Christmas, we welcomed children and adults alike to a Craft Morning; creating 125 bells (for our 125 years of course) with which to decorate our entry in the Datchworth Christmas Tree Festival.

Our Christmas celebrations were well attended with new children and families at our Christingle, Carol Service and Crib Service. The carol service, supported by our wonderful band and dedicated choir, was a moving and uplifting occasion. How lucky we are to have wonderful Penny Howes organising our music and such talented musicians in our midst. Our crib service was joyful, with beautiful angels, studious shepherds and giggly wise men. We nearly ran out of costumes and are thinking of investing in a few animal masks for next year. ‘Midnight Mass’ was reinstated this year, at the request of some longstanding congregation members, and it proved to

be very well received. This was made possible by Will presiding and sourcing a visiting organist for us.

A small group of enthusiastic volunteers have met across the year to work on our Mission Action Plan. This is an effective way to clarify thinking and discuss ideas for our Mission in the community. We currently have 4 main areas which we wish to prioritise over the next few years. Connecting and providing for families, Deepening spirituality of congregation and visitors, Connecting with our community and Improving accessibility. These areas will be the focus of our vision for our Church for the future.

We continue to welcome the Romanian Orthodox Church who share our building. Their priest, Father Iulian Rebeaga has attended some of our special occasions across the year. Likewise Rachel and Nita, and Jackie Davis our treasurer have been able to attend some of their services. The children singing at their carol service was especially moving, and their congregation's hospitality (and catering!) is inspiring to see.

At St. Michael's we are incredibly lucky that we have so many people that are prepared to do so much for their Church community. We have volunteers who set up for services, sing and play music, provide refreshments, arrange flowers, change altar frontals and hymn boards, write and read intercessions, tidy the churchyard, organise the food bank, sort out the entrance desk, deliver magazines, order wine, wafers, candles, batteries, lightbulbs etc. Believe me the list really is endless. Nita and Rachel extend their thanks to everyone at St. Michael's for all they do. We are a truly great team

Secondary Reports

Arpeggios Hand Bell Ringers– *Jenny McCann*

Arpeggios Handbell Ringers at 40

We continue to meet regularly in Church House on Thursday afternoons at 2.00 p.m. There are only a few handbell ringing groups in Hertfordshire and we are most fortunate to be able to make good use of the excellent Welwyn St Mary's handbells. Currently we have a small membership which is rather restrictive when it comes to public performances; 2025 was no exception, as we played just once, at St Peter's Church, Benington to a very appreciative audience of all ages. The programme contained a variety of music including The Ash Grove, Pachelbel's Canon, London Bells and Strawberry Fair.

During the year we were delighted to welcome a new member to the team who helpfully is able to read music and has some previous experience. Now as we enter our 40th year since the Arpeggios was founded, we hope that we will be welcoming more new members to discover the pleasure and satisfaction of making music together. Some musical knowledge would be desirable. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Marcia Khan on 01438 716625

Bible Discovery – *Gay and Mike Carpenter*

Our aim, as ever, is to enjoy our adventures into the Bible together. A real discussion happens when people feel able to say whatever they want knowing that they will be listened to and not condemned. Disagreements are often fruitful and sometimes, an off-the-wall idea can lead to a new line of investigation.

We began the year by finishing our study of Joseph in Genesis, looking back at his career from spoilt brat to Pharaoh's right-hand man in Egypt, through attempted murder, slavery, imprisonment and finally reconciliation. On February 26th, before the Lent course began, we packed organza bags with Easter gifts for the Ukrainian children. We then joined in with the Lent course, an interesting comparison of different expressions of Christianity starting with the Celtic.

Having had an Old Testament course, we looked for a New Testament one for the summer and chose Jesus's "I AM" sayings. No-one else could say the things Jesus said and be taken seriously. We had to prepare to wrestle with some amazing claims. For instance, one which we really wrestled with was "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." The *only* way? People often say that all religions are aiming for the same God. But this is what Jesus claimed as his disciples' world was falling apart. Today, as then, we are challenged to ask "Who is this Jesus who can make such claims?"

Our summer term ended with a tea party in our garden with strawberries, cream and Katie's wonderful lemon drizzle cake! Then more choosing took place for our Autumn course, the result being the prophet Amos because "we don't know anything about him"! What an excellent way to start our exploration! We met a man happily shepherding his flocks and tending sycamore trees when God called him to a very challenging mission which, according to tradition, ultimately cost him his life.

In September we had packed presents for the Ukrainian children so that they would arrive in time for Christmas. Then, on December 10th we shared Christmas memories, poems, readings, and enjoyed mulled wine and mince pies

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.

Lent Courses – *The Rev'd Dr David Munchin*

Lent courses followed a course of study written by the Ministry Team looking at five different 'flavours' of spirituality: Celtic, Franciscan, Ignatian, Book of Common Prayer, Charismatic. There were seven well attended groups.

Fellowship – *Marcia Khan*

Our year began with a very enjoyable January Lunch catered by Lobster Pot in association with Fizz Catering. 2025 talks have included "Disability - from Welfare to Rights to ...?", "My Life in the NHS", "St Anthony's Fire", "City of London Livery Company" and "Tearfund".

We enjoyed our annual Strawberry Tea in July and our Christmas Surprise included mince pies and stollen as well as poems, the history of carols and carol singing led by Committee members.

Details of our future meetings are posted in the Church pew sheets and on the back of the Welwyn Magazine. Everyone is welcome to join our meetings, which are followed by tea and cakes. We request a donation of £2 per person towards refreshments, a raffle and donations to Charities and the Church.

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*

It is nearly 20 years since I became involved with the organisation of The Ladies' Lunch which folded just after Covid. However in 2018 I thought that as there were several widowers and single men in the village it would be good to have a weekday lunch where both men and women could enjoy fellowship and have a nourishing meal together so with the co-operation of Maria Sherriff, we started the Community Lunch which proved to be very popular. Since that time Maria and I, together with the help from the Danesbury charity shop who have kindly helped by accepting the money, have provided 10 meals every year apart from the few months during Covid when they were sporadic. The Church has also benefitted from it as money from the lunches was always donated to the Church each month. This last year we have again enjoyed good food and companionship where four of the meals were provided by Claire from 'The Lobster Pot' as Maria from 'Fizz Catering' was not available.

Age has now crept up on me and I have decided to give up the organisation of the lunches but it is hoped that they will continue in the future.

Giving Action Group – *Vernonne Allan*

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 achieve a target equivalent to 15% of planned and plate giving on a rolling 3-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, to mention but a few.

GAG is responsible for choosing the charities to be supported through services on **Mothering Sunday**, **Harvest Festival** and at **Christmas**. We aim to support one local, one national and one international charity each year at these services.

£845.39 was raised for local charity, *Home-Start Hertfordshire* on Mothering Sunday.

£398.23 was raised for international charity, the *Bishop's Harvest Appeal Leprosy Mission* at Harvest Festival Service.

£1,919.56 was raised for national charity *The Salvation Army* at two services held on Christmas Eve and one on Christmas Day.

GAG also assist with organising fund raising for *Christian Aid*, including CA Week.

£3,992.37 was raised, thanks to efforts by a number of people and events.

Other charitable events in 2025 increased the totals outlined above to result in total charitable giving of £15,815.24 (excluding gift aid). This year's total as in a number of previous years is considerably enhanced by the profit from the annual pantomime. Many thanks to all involved

The average of the last three years' charitable giving (2023, 24, 25) is £15,405.83. This year's charitable giving, although higher at £15,815.24 still did not reach the target of £17,341.43, which is 15% of the donations received by the church in 2024 (i.e. in the previous year). The shortfall is £1,935.60. This monetary shortfall has been more than filled this year through the extraordinary charity of individual parishioners giving in cash and kind to support an activity most generously operated from the home of Gay and Mike Carpenter who obtain and pass on goods to *UK-Aid* for transport to Ukraine.

GAG is run by five busy people with support from the Treasurer. It is rare that all six can find a time to meet all together, so we would be delighted to welcome one or two more parishioners to join GAG. We also seek a chairperson.

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

St Mary's Ringing Band – *John Williams*

In 2025 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 2025 we rang for one wedding and four at Codicote. We hosted two district practices, four visiting bands who rang quarter peals (45 – 60 minutes of continuous ringing) and two visiting bands who rang full peals (approx 3 hours of continuous ringing). We hosted a practice by the Young @Herts band of young ringers. We rang at the start of the street market for the Welwyn festival and opened the Tower that Saturday morning.

We currently have 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 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 and 80s!

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.

71 lilies to remember loved ones were sponsored at Easter. It is always a privilege to arrange these lilies in arrangements at the altar and the high altar. Simple foliage, e.g. aspidistra leaves and twisted willow are used. The beauty of the lilies, and the fact that they are grouped together, is very special.

The Chapel of Repose was decorated for Maundy Thursday. The church is dimly lit at the end of the Maundy Thursday service. The candlelit chapel, the foliage and the flowers enhance an atmosphere which holds us as part of the recognition and devotion to the three hours of Christ's passion.

The team are no longer responsible for wedding flowers at St Mary's. There was one wedding during 2025 for which an outside florist provided the flowers. She made a donation to the flower fund following that wedding.

We provided arrangements during the year to contribute to other special events:

The Memorial Service for Alistair Chalk.

Flowers in memory of Beryl Hammond, Matthew Dowdell, Alice Burnapp and Dennis Dinsdale.

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

Pentecost

Patronal Festival

All Souls Service

Thank you to all the members of the Flower Team for their continued support, encouragement and work throughout the year.

St Mary's Choir – *Rob Milner*

The choir has continued to grow and improve – despite a few retirements over the year. This year we travelled to Lichfield Cathedral in July/August where we sang 3 evensongs and a Eucharist. It was an absolute joy and our psalm singing was much praised by the cathedral clergy. Sadly Bristol managed to double book us this year so we are unable to continue our run of weekends away.

This year has been a year of focus on growing our junior choir and we now have a good group of around 12 children singing with us. Having a good number helps secure the longevity of the choir in the short, medium and long term. A big thank you to our Rector, Andy Pitman and Jo Fozzard for their amazing support in getting this group off the ground.

I continue to challenge the choir to learn new and challenging music. I feel this is important to keep things fresh and ensure everyone feels like they're growing as singers. We're currently learning a beautiful piece for our Easter Carol Service on 26 April. Christmas Carols was a big challenge with many difficult pieces new to the choir. This coming year I hope to showcase the juniors a little more so the adults may be able to have a less stressful time!

We do need men to keep the choir going in the long term. We have some great male singers in the choir – but just not enough of them. When we are missing a couple, it gets rather challenging to sing in 4 part harmony. Please do try and evangelise for the choir. Anyone with an interest in singing is welcome. We can help teach music theory and sight singing and there are ways of learning the music without being able to sight sing.

A lot of work goes into this and I thank the choir and our organists for their time and patience over the last year and the year to come.

Please do come along to Evensong on the 2nd Sunday of the Month at 6:30pm. It's a wonderful service – full of music of high quality. We will sing to no-one but it's always nicer to have more people listening!

St Mary's Welcome Team – *Jenny Wiseman*

As previously explained in APCM reports, there has not been a formal welcome team for some time.

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 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. It is lovely to see the reactions and responses to the children and young people who attend our church or sing with the choir.

Café church has given the opportunity for people to sit together and get to know each other better, being involved with crafts and a much more casual style of worship.

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

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

To begin with we thank all those who volunteered (or had their arm twisted) to lead a walk for this group last year. Sadly fewer people are willing or able to lead walks nowadays due to health problems. None of us are getting any younger and we would really welcome some new/younger members to this group.

Here follows a short summary of the walks in 2025:-

January – Louise Hughes, led her default walk from St Mary's Church to Linces Farm, Ayot Montfitchet, Ayot St Peter and back down Whitehill and School Lane to the village and lunch at the Rose & Crown.

February – Hyacinth Cudjoe led a circular walk from and back to the White Horse, Burnham Green.

March – Joany and Dom Cox led the group along a section of the Welwyn Garden City Centenary Walk from Commonswood School to the Cowper Arms at Digswell.

April – Peter Brattle kindly led this one from and back to The Swan, Wheathampstead.

May – due to no volunteer leader Louise suggested that the group walked the 'default walk' as done in January.

June – Mary Bentley kindly led this one around Amwell, starting and finishing at The Elephant & Castle pub, now sadly closed for the foreseeable future.

July – Louise led the next part of the W.G.C. Centenary Walk starting underneath the Digswell viaduct and through Sherrards Park Woods. Anne Lloyd kindly led the second half of this walk (Louise had a painful hip) from The Waggoners across Brocket Hall golf course and down to Lemsford. As this walk is linear rather than circular lifts were arranged from Lemsford back to the Cowper Arms at Digswell for lunch.

The August walk was led by Keith Creasy. Thank you Keith.

The walk started and finished at The Red Lion, Digswell Hill.

Most of the route was along the Ayot Greenway followed by paths alongside the River Lea and across the Brocket Hall golf course.

September – Barry Northrop kindly agreed to lead this one in spite of a bad back. The route started and finished at The White Horse, Burnham Green through Harmer Green woods to Robbery Bottom Lane, Datchworth, through woodland and across some fields to Bulls Green and back to the White Horse.

October – The plan was that Joany Cox would lead the next section of the W.G.C. Centenary Walk from Lemsford back to Commonswood School. However when she and Dom went to check it out, they found that the tunnel under the A1(M) at Stanborough Lakes was seriously flooded (not by the lake!) and impassable. They looked at shortening the walk from Stanborough Lakes to Commonswood School. However on the day in question the weather was very rainy and as a result the walk was cancelled.

November's walk was kindly led by Sue Meaker and Maureen (Mo) Pinnington and was based around the Plume of Feathers, Tewin. There were lovely countryside views on a walk apparently devised by Sue and Mo, so kudos for that. Lunch was at the Plume, naturally.

December – no walk is scheduled in December it being too close to Christmas and most people are otherwise occupied.

If you have read as far as this you will have noted that there were not very many walk leaders which is a shame as leading a walk in a walking group is enjoyable as it allows you to share your love of nature and the local area with others, build connections with your community, experience the satisfaction of planning a walk, get regular exercise outdoors and potentially learn new things about your surroundings from group members with local knowledge. And, as if those were insufficient incentive to encourage you to volunteer to lead a walk you also get to choose the lunch venue. Why not give it a try; you will grow in skills and confidence with each walk you lead? There are many websites from which to select walks and some can be downloaded to your phone to assist with leading a walk.

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

Time for Reflection – *Mavis Francis*

We have covered a very varied programme of topics this year starting with a film about Sacred wonders of Britain such as Creswell Crags which is an enclosed limestone gorge on the border between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire; Dorstone Hill; Grime's Graves and Flag Fen showing how ancient faith was influenced by the natural world. In February we talked about Dr. Florence Li Tim Oi who was the first woman to be ordained as an Anglican woman priest in 1944 by Bishop Ronald Hall. We then followed an interesting Lent course after which we learnt about the Maltese Cross. Our outing in June was to the Catholic Church in Knebworth. In July Linda Dobbs told us about her duties as a Sacristan. The October meeting was about how we can know God, whilst in November and December slavery was the subject. We heard about the American lady, Harriet Tubman, who helped many slaves escape from the southern states of America to the northern states and Canada. We ended the year discussing modern day slavery. The December and July meetings were followed by a visit for lunch to Grace Community Church in Stevenage.

Why not come and join us? We meet on the third Friday of the month (except August) in Church House at 10am for coffee and chat starting at 10.30am. You would be most welcome. Contact Mavis Francis 01438 487851 or just turn up!

St Mary's booklets – *Pat Brooks*

'A History and Guide of St Mary's Church, Welwyn' booklets were on display for visitors to purchase.

The Welwyn with Woolmer Green Magazine –

Rita McNeill

The magazine is delivered to over 500 households in Ayot St Peter, Woolmer Green and Welwyn, as well as being sold in various shops and businesses in the villages and being posted to subscribers who live further away.

The editors try to maintain a varied mix of fascinating articles on events, buildings, personalities, history, businesses and Parish news, but this depends upon submissions from local people. The editorial team is always delighted to receive articles, photographs, recipes and reports, from local organisations and people who live in the area. The deadline is the first of the month preceding publication and all articles are presented to the editorial team and the Church Wardens for approval.

The magazine's revenue brings in much needed funds for our churches, the money being split equally between St Michael's and St Mary's. Last year, the donation was £5,000 to each church! A large proportion of this comes from advertising in the magazine. We are grateful to Jane Beale who continues to organise the advertising efficiently – and profitably!

In recent months we have lost a number of our magazine distributors and some of the editorial team. We cannot continue to produce this wonderful village resource without help. Many distributors are in their 70s and 80s and the editorial team would also welcome additional members, especially younger people. There are opportunities in distribution, editing, chasing contributors, cover artists/photographers, proof-reading and general support for the team. The duties are not onerous – one meeting a month for ten months a year for the editorial team. Editors each produce three or four magazines a year. There are currently three editors in the team which consists of seven members. Even one more editor would mean each one would only have to produce two or three magazines a year. Distributors

deliver magazines once a month for ten months and collect subscriptions once a year.

Sunday Morning Coffee – Vernonne Allan

A large number of the 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. We also warmly welcome those who joined the rota this year so that we have regular cover every Sunday. We are indebted also to the pairs who have covered on the fourth Sunday as there is extra work to heat pastries and croissants to serve with coffee during Messy Church service.

Thank you too, to our reserve team. We would welcome more reserves, help is only occasionally required and training is always given to newcomers. Our WhatsApp group makes rearranging commitments easy.

Again, the congregation have contributed generously, all money raised goes towards Church funds. Thank you to all who help, to those who have supplied biscuits and to all who give donations for their tea and coffee. This is an important part of Sunday morning for many.

St Mary's Evening Book Group – *Wendy Lawrence*

The St Mary's Evening Book Group meets at 8 pm 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*

We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 2.30 pm in Church House. We mostly read fiction, usually from the list provided by the library. We normally get the books from the library, which now costs the group £33 per year. Some people have Kindles. We always have a stimulating discussion, even if we don't always agree. At present we have 12 members, we usually get 8 to 10 people attending. In January we have a social meeting with lunch, as we don't read a book over Christmas.

Care Homes Ministry – *Usha Hull*

The ministry for care homes is shared between Usha Hull at Monread Lodge and Knebworth Care Home; Jo Sampson at Heath Lodge and Autumn Vale and the 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 of the five care homes, we hold a fun-filled service with not just carols but poems, jokes, and short readings. In 2025, the Christmas carol services were packed with residents, care home staff as well as volunteer singers. New volunteers are always welcome.

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 raise thousands for charity. We begin to rehearse once a week from late summer. In 2025 all proceeds from the much-loved pantomime 'Oh, what a knight!', with four performances in November, went to Tearfund. The group raised a record profit of £2,912.17.

New members who wish to join us will be warmly welcomed – there is always a need to fill both cast parts as well as background roles such as 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 during the year, notably in dramatised readings during the Pentecost service and for the Easter Passion readings.

Saturday morning refreshments – *Maggie Varco*

We welcome visitors and offer refreshments in Church House each Saturday morning between 10 am and 11.30 am. Our “drop-in café” is a popular meeting place for regular visitors and offers a warm welcome to newcomers to the church, including those coming to the clergy surgery between 10 am and 11 am.

We continue to serve Fairtrade coffee, tea and biscuits wherever possible, in order to support farmers in the developing world who benefit from receiving a fair price and a Fairtrade premium.

Many thanks to our team of volunteers who serve the refreshments on a rota basis.



**Draft Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church
Meeting of St Mary's, Welwyn with St Michael's,
Woolmer Green at Church House on Wednesday
7th May 2025**

Attendees

David Munchin (DM) Chairman, Maggie Varco (MV), Stuart Jenkin (SJ), Diane Jenkin (DJ), Veronne Allan (VA), Jackie Davis (JD), Jenny Wiseman, Mavis Francis, Christine Allday, Gina Beck, Pat Brooks, Rowena and Fiona McDonald, Susan Keach (SK), Beryl Cooke, Mike and Gay Carpenter, Glynis Johnston, John Burland, Nicky Jackson, Rachel Wadey, Nita Gowans, Linda Dobbs, Will Ellis, Gill and Simon Blewett, Colin Hull, Helen McKay, Jane Smith, Wendy Lawrence, Louise & David Hughes (Secretaries).

Apologies for absence

Stuart Westley (SW) Crystal Lam, Liz Hesketh, John Burnapp, Jasmine Marson, Usha Hull and Joan Shelley.

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 for St Mary's

Diane Jenkin was nominated by Linda Dobbs and seconded by Keith Smythe. Stuart Westley was nominated by Mike Carpenter and seconded by Gay Carpenter.

Election of churchwardens for St Michael's

Nita Gowans was nominated by Sue Keach and seconded by Jackie Davis, Rachel Wadey was nominated by Gina Beck and seconded by Sue Keach

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 which were circulated in advance of the meeting. After the meeting there will be puddings and Dr. Glynis Johnston will give a presentation on art and culture.

Attendance and apologies for absence

As for meeting 1 above.

Review of minutes of APCM 01/05/2024

Approved by all with no amendments and signed by DM.

Matters arising therefrom

None.

Presentation of the electoral roll

Diane Jenkin reported that there were 256 on the electoral roll. Since it was last updated there are three fewer on the roll for St Michael's. A new register is currently being compiled. Parishioners may join the electoral roll at any time.

Lay members to PCC.

Crystal Lam was elected for a further term, proposed by Diane Jenkin and seconded by Maggie Varco.

Liz Hesketh was elected, proposed by Vernonne Allan and seconded by Stuart Jenkin. Dr. Glynis Johnston was elected, proposed by Diane Jenkin and seconded by Vernonne Allan. The Chairman thanked members for their service to the PCC and to retiring members Christine Allday and Maggie Varco for their past service. The Chairman advised that he would be giving an introduction and refresher of the duties and responsibilities of members of the PCC for new joiners and

any existing members that would like it at 7:00 pm on 14th May.

Sidespersons – The list of sidespersons was unanimously approved.

Finance reports and re-appointment of the independent examiner of accounts:

Retiring treasurer, Maggie Varco gave a brief summary of her financial report and accounts covering St Mary's and St Michael's for 2024 as follows;

“The accounts document is available as a printed handout and on St Mary's website on 'A Church Near You' It is the **combined finances of St. Mary's and St. Michael's churches** for Jan - Dec 2024.

Regular giving, other donations and legacies are the most important income stream for our two churches – making up 75% of the money coming in.

There was a welcome increase of 7% in regular giving last year and the Giving Weekend in May at St Mary's highlighted the need for all those who are able to donate, to review their giving and increase if possible... so that the churches can pay their bills which inevitably rise each year.

This year's Giving Weekend is coming up – the message remains the same, and we invite as many people as possible to donate via the Parish Giving Scheme, choosing the optional inflationary increase, which is of the most benefit to the churches.

The parish is a registered charity, which enables us to claim gift aid on all donations made with a gift aid declaration – this brought in an additional £33,600 last year.

St Michael's is proud of and grateful for its links with the Romanian Orthodox Community who hire St Michael's for their services. This generated £4,500 income last year. The Red Lion, Woolmer Green continues to make regular donations.

A number of church activities generate funds (at St Mary's; the Flowers team, Fellowship group, Tower bell ringers and Bookstall) and the Parish Magazine which generated income of £10,400 that was split between the two churches.

Church House is let to local organisations and used regularly by the Tuesday Community Café, monthly Community lunches and Saturday breakfasts, generating £5,800.

The monthly Saturday recitals at St Mary's are very popular, raising £5,500 after the deduction of expenses

There was much talk about the very high cost of the gas and electricity bills in 2023 – last year utility bills were thankfully £5,000 lower, but still a big chunk of our expenditure at £24,000.

And finally, supporting charities is a very important part of what the parish does.

Last year just over £15,000 was raised for charities - details of the money raised at St Mary's are given in the APCM booklet.

So, looking at the parish's finances overall in 2024 Income was just over £241,000, expenditure just over £245,750, so there was a deficit of just over £4,600, a little better than had been budgeted.

The total funds on the balance sheet are just over £889,000
The table on the back page of the accounts document shows how this is made up. It includes, of course, the value of St Michael's House which was sold in the autumn and the cash proceeds are shown in this table.

The PCC's reserves policy is to hold at least 4 months' running costs as unrestricted cash – at the end of last year this figure was just over £119,000 which represents 5½ months' running costs, thus meeting the PCC's policy.

And finally, a word about this year, 2025. After 5 years as PCC treasurer Maggie Varco is handing over to a new volunteer. She is very grateful that Helen McKay, who is already on the PCC, has offered to take over as treasurer.

The PCC's full support will be appreciated during the handover in the coming months.

"Thank you"was expressed

to all those who donate their time, skills and money to the church communities

to Jackie Davis for looking after the finances at St. Michael's

to everyone who helps with the finances at St Mary's, including Stuart Westley, Di and Stuart Jenkin, Pat Brooks, Beth Bates and Richard Carden

And thank you to Chartered Accountant Chris Burton for doing the independent examination of the accounts free of charge for the fourth year.

He does this very thoroughly; his knowledge and expertise are invaluable.

Appointing independent examiner of 2025 accounts

Mr Julian Hobbs (of Julian Hobbs & Co, Chartered Accountants and Tax Advisers, WGC) will take over from Chris Burton as our payroll provider.

Regular giving = Parish Giving Scheme, standing orders, gift aid envelopes and CAF

2024 numbers (2023 in italics)

6 more Parish Giving Scheme (3 fewer standing orders)

39% PGS compared to 2023 35%

	Parish Giving Scheme / CAF	Standing orders	Total regular givers
St Mary's	38 33	49 52	87 85
St Michael's	4 3	13 + 3 reg env 16	20 19
TOTAL	42 (39%) 36 (35%)	65 (61%) 68 (65%)	107 104

Monthly parish share

£8,994 St Mary's, £1,564 St Michael's

Clergy stipends, pensions, housing and training, contributing to the cost of the ministry across the diocese.

Deficit

Just over £4,600, a little better than budgeted – £8,435.

There were no questions following the presentation.

Maggie's report was unanimously approved as was the appointment of Mr. Julian Hobbs as independent examiner of accounts for 2025. He has kindly agreed to provide his services pro bono but will charge for his staff to do some of the leg-work. Copies of the treasurer's report and accounts were available at the meeting and in St Mary's church.

Maggie was presented with a bottle of champagne and heartily thanked for her five years of excellent service as treasurer to the PCC.

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 2025.

APCM REPORT
BY THE TEAM RECTOR,
THE REV'D DR DAVID MUNCHIN,
FOR
THE PARISH OF WELWYN AND WOOLMER
GREEN 2025

It's always slightly difficult to know where to start with an annual report, and so given we have a 'giving weekend' coming up, perhaps a good a start as any is to reassure you that I am not going to talk about Stewardship or money. But finances for churches are always slightly double edged – we need to raise enough money from your generous giving to function effectively, but we also – and arguably more importantly in today's world – need to look outward to the often greater needs of others throughout the world. As you can see from our handouts we do this in a variety of ways as churches, with the undertaking that in normal circumstances, the PCC will underwrite giving of 15% to charitable causes. We exceeded that last year I am pleased to say, as detailed in the handout. As you can see our largest single contribution is to Christian Aid which offers support to some of the poorest people in the world. Last year and this, we do that mainly in three ways, and two of those are coming up, so I urge your support. A few weeks ago, we had the super soup lunch – one of my best lunches of the year it has to be said. Coming up is a quiz night – book your table soon. And a sponsored

event – a triathlon last year, and coming up next week an even larger triathlon. If you can't swim or cycle or run, then you are the most important, because you are the donors! I have to say that last night I was checking my upcoming route, and I've slightly over-egged the mileage – it's 400 miles rather than 460, but please don't let that diminish your generosity.

Mission Action Planning is an idea promoted by the Diocese to help churches flourish. The idea being that you set yourself achievable goals, over a period of around three years, which are regularly reviewed by the PCC. We've now just about come to the end of our three years, and have roughly achieved what we set out to do at Welwyn. The final goal was to start a more informal monthly service in our pattern of worship. This we have successfully done in the form of our 4th Sunday café style service. I understand it is not for all, and to those I would remind you that there are still two parish Eucharists on that Sunday, at 8am and 6.30pm, without and with music respectively. But I think all have generally accepted that the new style worship has been appreciated, and has attracted some new people, and indeed some younger families. In the next year this does mean of course that we shall have to look at our next Mission Action Plan, and see what might be our goals and priorities for the next three years or so.

We held Lent groups in both 2024 and 2025. In 2024 we took advantage of a local initiative enabled by the fact that the Methodist Modern Art Collection was being displayed at the Focolare Centre in Welwyn Garden City. A few weeks ago, we looked at different ways of praying, inspired by people, books and movements. The feedback from both of those courses seems to have been positive, and I am glad they are fulfilling and appreciated.

So then to our Summer Evensongs, taking advantage of the longer summer evenings, and our beautiful team church settings, we looked at the natural world in the bible: so things like rivers, cities, mountains and gardens – one each week for six weeks over the school summer holidays.

There have been some comings and goings in the ministry team this year, actually I am pleased to say that there have only been comings, no one has gone, though there has been a bit of moving around. Christie and Ryan have moved to Codicote where Christie has become the curate in charge, and is soon to be made Team Vicar. She has kept up her work at Woolmer Green school, and has been seconded to an academic administration post in Cambridge for a day a week for the past few months. That has meant that she has handed over responsibility for parish work in Woolmer Green. As providence would have it at around that time we were pleased to welcome Nicky Jackson as a self-supporting minister in the team, chiefly working in Woolmer Green. Nicky works full time as a teaching assistant and Chaplain at St Mary's school, but freely gives of her spare time to parish ministry. Like buses, another one came along moments later in the form of Will Ellis. Will is what is known as a house for duty minister, that is someone who gives a good number of hours of ministry each week, and occupies a parish house free of charge. Will's main areas of ministry are also in Woolmer Green and Ayot St Peter. He will be with us for the next year before he moves on. He lives in a new house in Woolmer Green. A rather splendid modern, semi-detached house in the heart of that community. I have to say a huge thank you to Stuart Jenkin for guiding us through that move. I have to say I was slightly untrusting at first, when he seemed to suggest that we could sell a house, which was looking like needing a lot of money spending on it, and buy a slightly larger five-year-old house, and make a good few pennies in the process. However it was done, and we are very grateful. Our hope is that there will be a new curate in that house, possibly from June 2026. I have to prepare you by saying that 20 parishes are looking for curates at that point, and that there are seven candidates, so we may have to wait – though I did have a first tentative phone call with a prospective curate yesterday evening, so we shall see. It is important to remember that curates and ministers have to come from somewhere – there is no factory out there that makes them,

they come from other churches like ours. It is of course true that in recent years our gifts to the wider church have been in the form of Kathryn Alford and Kirsty Wainwright, but in that time, we've received three curates in return, so we are already one down. It is particularly heartening that Jo Fozzard is putting herself forward for Reader ministry. Vocations are something we all need to think about – even if that isn't 'you', actually very few people think 'yes, me', it is nearly always someone else saying 'have you ever thought about whether God might be calling you to ministry?' which becomes the spark that lights the flame. It is everybody's job to say to others 'have you ever thought about ministry' because nearly every vocation begins with those words from an encouraging friend.

A word about music in our churches. We are delighted that Penny Howes continues to play the organ and run a small choir at Woolmer Green – they give a great musical lead week by week. There is also a small band at family services, and at the Christmas Carol service they showed a remarkable range of talents. At Welwyn the music has been under the direction of Rob Milner, and we are very thankful to him and his fellow musicians for all they do. We have Junior and Adult choirs, and a small group of musicians at café church. I think it is fair to say that the choir has been quite ambitious in the past year, but have met those challenges with great skill – for instance The Crucifixion by Stainer on Good Friday this year, and a very successful trip to Rochester Cathedral last year – this August they are off to Lichfield Cathedral for a weekend there. As well as church music, we also have our Saturday lunchtime concerts. Our thanks to Stephen Foster for organising the bulk of these. The standard has been extraordinarily high, and is drawing in an ever-larger number of people. I have to say the format – regular, lunchtime, free entrance – helps. It makes them fairly minimal to plan, good attendance, and good fundraising. As I said at the outset, a church's finances can be judged by as much as it gives away, as much as by how much it raises, so we note that this Saturday's concert will be a special one to raise money for

Ukraine, where that bloody and terrible conflict continues to take a huge toll in the form of wasted human lives and suffering – our thoughts, prayers, and indeed, I hope, money and gifts, are all with our Ukrainian friends.

Our summer Holiday Club for children was ‘Deep Sea Divers.’ I have to say in all honesty it was one of the best we have ever done, but the attendance was slightly down on usual, which was a shame. I’m just looking at material for this year, so do please let any primary school age children know that this runs in the first week of the summer holidays. Here, as for Junior Church, we are always looking for new helpers. There may not be large numbers of children on Sunday mornings, though it is slowly growing, but frankly if they do come and find nothing for them, it is unlikely they will come again.

Our two church schools continue to provide an important element of ministry and witness in providing primary education in our villages with a distinctive Christian ethos. Both schools are thriving. We particularly thank the staff and the heads, Jan and Stuart for their inspirational work in those establishments. We are delighted that under a new, tough OFSTED regime St Mary’s was recently found to be good in all areas, with an incredibly positive written report.

Talking of children and their care, and also of course including vulnerable adults, we must admit that the last year was a terrible one in terms of publicity for the wider Church of England. The issue was safeguarding. Safeguarding can never just be a tick box exercise – it includes, but is not limited to background checks, appropriate training, and vigilance – but more than that it is a fundamental priority that children and vulnerable adults are kept safe from harm. We all have a part to play in the establishment of that culture. I am particularly thankful to our Parish Safeguarding Officers Rachel Wadey and Vicky Jenkin – if you are concerned about anything please do talk to them or to me.

I must also underline that sometimes the annual report can seem a little like a record of the extraordinary events of a year. But year by year most of the church’s ministry is at the

everyday coal face. It is the daily and weekly offering of worship – with all that entails front of house, and behind the scenes. It is friendship and pastoral care. It is coffee and teacakes at Community Café; it is the Community lunch. It is being with people when a baby is born, when a couple are married, when someone they love dies. It is being in a church school and teaching children about Jesus. It is keeping the building open and inviting. It is being a host for upcoming VE day on Thursday, and the lovely events of Welwyn Week. All of these involve costs and labour but ultimately, they make up the gospel. As well as global problems the church has a few of its own, some of its own making – but these things go on day by day in parishes.

And if you are lost as to what to do in this sometimes-tricky world, come and say your prayers with us. There is a daily service in one of the team churches, and dare I say it, there is even a Daily Prayer app. The most important ministry of all is prayer.

As ever I will keep my thanks brief as I shall inevitably miss many people out. So first of all, thank you to all of you. Then to thank those who serve on our PCC.

We thank Stuart Jenkin for all he has done for the fabric of our churches. We thank Maggie Varco for her diligent and time-consuming work as Treasurer – she hands over the mantle this year, but we are so grateful for the work she has done over the past years. And we thank Jackie Davis for her continued help looking after the money at St Michaels. Our thanks to Louise Hughes for her diligent work as secretary, not least in preparing for this evening.

Finally, my thanks to our wonderful churchwardens, Diane and Stuart. They act with grace, humour and wisdom. I particularly want to thank them. There is so much behind the scenes and if you ever wonder who attends services, opens and closes the church every day, puts the bins out – then that is just the start of the wardens' duties – often overlooked or taken for granted. There are others too many to mention – but one I'm particularly grateful to is, Linda in the vestry and serving team.

Finally, we remember those who have died from our parish, and those friends that we miss Pat Lewis, John Johnson, Margaret Neville, Johnny Johnstone, Alice Burnapp, Joan Chapman, Monus Rowland, Gerald Blewett, Alistair Chalk, Robin Whitten and Gwen Linder. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

The primary reports in the APCM booklet as listed

PCC Secretaries' report
Welwyn Hatfield Deanery Synod Report
Team Council Report
St Mary's Fabric Report
St Mary's Safeguarding Report
St Michael's Church, Woolmer Green Report
And the Church warden reports

were accepted with no queries raised.

The other reports in this booklet summarise the important work of the various activity groups of both churches and make interesting reading.

Any other business

Linda Dobbs, who looks after the serving team, has recently lost members of her team and is looking to recruit new members and rebuild the team.

Closing Prayer – The grace prayer was said by all.