

## CHURCH SERVICES at ST MARY'S and ST JOHN'S

**1st Sunday of the month:** 9.30am Parish Communion at St Mary's

**2nd Sunday of the month:** 9.30am Family Communion at St John's

**3rd Sunday of the month:** 9.30am Morning Worship at St Mary's

**4th Sunday of the month:** 9.30am Worship for All at St John's

**5th Sundays:** 10.30am Langtree Team Service in one of the Team churches.

Coffee and biscuits are served after services: in the Old Stables after services at St Mary's, and in church after services at St John's.

All welcome!

For more details see the Langtree Team website at [langtreechurches.org](http://langtreechurches.org) or the church website [achurchnearyou.com/422](http://achurchnearyou.com/422).

If you would like to give to the work of the church locally you can do so using this QR code.



St Mary the Virgin

July to October  
2024

## The Parish Magazine for Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill



St John the Baptist



***Summer turns to Autumn***

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## **Officers of the Parish**

### ***Team Rector:***

Revd Canon Kevin Davies, The Rectory, Checkendon, Reading, RG8 0SR.  
01491 680252. [revkevdivies-langtree@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:revkevdivies-langtree@yahoo.co.uk)

### ***Team Vicar:***

Revd James Leach, St Mary's House, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames,  
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### ***Churchwardens:***

Kenneth Baker, 10 Laytom Rise, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6FQ.  
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### ***Verger:***

Kenneth Baker (contact details above).

### ***Honorary Secretary:*** vacant

### ***Electoral Roll Officer:***

Rosemary Pearce, Little Eastfield, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames,  
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### ***Honorary Treasurer:***

Peter Dragonetti, Covert Cottage, Hill Bottom, Whitchurch Hill, Reading,  
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### ***Assistant. Treasurer:***

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### ***Organist and Choirmaster:*** rota

### ***Contact for the Bell Ringers:***

Kenneth Baker, 0118 943 2778

### ***Magazine Editorial Team:***

Wendy Ferguson, Rosemary Pearce, Angi Simpson.

Correspondence to [wendyf21@icloud.com](mailto:wendyf21@icloud.com)

Copy deadline for the November issue is Friday, 11th October.

***From July 2024 Whitchurch Parish Magazine will be issued three times a year: in March, July, and November, and can be viewed online in the Church section of the village website, [whitchurchonthames.com](http://whitchurchonthames.com).***

**WOTsing Choir is the community choir for Whitchurch-on-Thames and Whitchurch Hill**, which was formed in 2018. It is not a performing choir and members do not have to be able to read music, to take an audition or even to sing in tune! It is simply for people who enjoy singing. We meet once a month in St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill, but we are not in any sense a church choir. We sing songs from the shows, folk songs, pop songs, the occasional well-known hymn, but most important is that we enjoy singing, have fun and lots of laughter, and go home feeling happier than when we arrived!

Our current accompanist is Tim Taylor and we always meet on the first Thursday of the month from 7.30 to 9pm.

For more information about the choir, please contact Geraldine on [wotsing2018@gmail.com](mailto:wotsing2018@gmail.com)

### **Wednesday Evening Compline Prayer Group at 8pm GMT**

In our Compline prayer we practise faithfully the presence of God. We pray gently, humbly and without giving way to anxiety. We share our prayers and also for the world as a source of divine pleasure. As our hearts and minds return to the word, we are focused upon the love of God. We learn and receive through the Holy Spirit the abundance of the Lord's grace. We are established internationally and ecumenically and it is a thrilling experience to flourish with Christians in other parts of the world as we embrace Jesus with tenderness and joy. Do join us if you can on ZOOM meeting No 261 107 9079 at 7.55pm.

Mobile: 07557 383634

Email: [peter@pcfconsultancy.com](mailto:peter@pcfconsultancy.com)

### **‘Brambly Thatch’**

A Holiday Cottage near Whitchurch Hill - so handy when family or friends from afar come to stay.

Call Kate or John Hatt, 0118 984 3121 or email: [info@bramblythatch.co.uk](mailto:info@bramblythatch.co.uk)



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## Letter from the Vicar

Dear Friends,

One of the joys of summer holidays for many of us is the opportunity to get lost in a good book. I often take the opportunity to indulge in a thriller or some detective fiction. I also pick something from my 'to read' pile of books about aspects of Christian faith and ministry. It's one of the ways that I keep stretched and growing in my faith. I know not all of us are book readers, but for those who are, here are three books that have nourished me along the way, books that I return to, or plan to return to, again and again.

### ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis***

Like many children, I suspect, when I first read the Chronicles of Narnia I was unaware of the Christian allegory that runs through them. I simply responded to them as great stories, told by a master story-teller. Little did I know then that the excitement and joy that came from reading them could be linked directly to the good news of Jesus Christ. One of the key elements of Lewis' genius is his ability to make goodness deeply attractive. Who wouldn't want to meet Aslan in real life? But then, of course, we can, and that is what Lewis would have wanted for all his readers. As a bonus, I'd recommend *The Last Battle*, which is the final book in Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia series. The closing pages give the most exciting imaginative depiction of what the next life might be like that I know.

### ***The Jesus I Never Knew by Philip Yancey***

Philip Yancey has written a number of books well worth reading, but this is that one that has impacted me the most. Of course, Jesus is at the heart of Christian faith, but do we really know him? This is a question that is relevant at every stage of faith. Whether you're already familiar with the gospel accounts of Jesus's life in the New Testament or not, Yancey gives a fresh and exciting perspective on who Jesus was, why he came and what he left behind.

- what obstacles do you face and what obstacles have you already overcome?
- who is accompanying you on the journey?
- where are you getting your directions from?
- what baggage are you carrying with you?

Finally, here is a pilgrimage blessing for us all:

May God the Father who created you, guide your footsteps,  
may God the Son who redeemed you, share your journey,  
may God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies you, lead you on life's pilgrimage,  
and the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you wherever you may go. Amen

## The Old Stables Meeting Room

The Old Stables Meeting Room is a welcoming, carpeted space in the centre of Whitchurch-on-Thames available for hire by local groups and private event organizers. There are tables and chairs for up to 35 people and a well-equipped kitchen.

Hire fees start at £15 for 2 hours. For more information please contact

Geoff Weir at [OldStablesBookings@btinternet.com](mailto:OldStablesBookings@btinternet.com)

*The Old Stables Meeting Room is owned by the Diocese of Oxford and managed by Whitchurch Parochial Church Council.*





### **Pilgrimage**

The end of June saw the launch of St. Frideswide's Way, a pilgrimage route named after Oxford's patron saint that goes from Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford to Reading Abbey. Excitingly for us, St Mary's Whitchurch-on Thames is one of the churches on the new route and we'll soon have an official stamp for pilgrim "passports". From the Christ Church website:

As an accredited Camino Inglés route, St Frideswide's Way can be walked as part of the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St James), the famous Europe-wide network of medieval pilgrimage routes culminating at the Cathedral of St James in Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Walking the Camino has seen a huge increase in popularity in recent years, with nearly 440,000 pilgrims across Europe walking to Santiago in 2022 by the different available routes, including over 24,000 on the Camino Inglés.

As well as being a powerful experience in its own right, pilgrimage has long been seen as a metaphor for the Christian life: it's a purposeful journey towards a final destination, often in the company of others, and always in the company of God. The metaphor suggests some helpful questions about our life's journey, such as:

### ***How to Pray by John Pritchard***

Written by a former Bishop of Oxford, this the book I recommend to people starting out on a life of prayer or looking to go deeper. It's divided into bite-size sections and covers all the basics of prayer as well as introducing some of the historic traditions of Christian spirituality. It's full of practical advice and has plenty of suggestions for further reading. Even for people who have been Christians for decades it is sometimes worth going back to basics when it comes to prayer, and this is a great book to help you to do just that.

Whether you end up reading anything new this summer or not, may I wish you a relaxing and refreshing time.

Last, but by no means least, I'd like to take the opportunity in this letter to thank Wendy Ferguson for her wonderful service in editing this magazine for so many years. Her commitment has made a huge impact and we are all truly grateful.

Every blessing,  
James

0118 976 5905

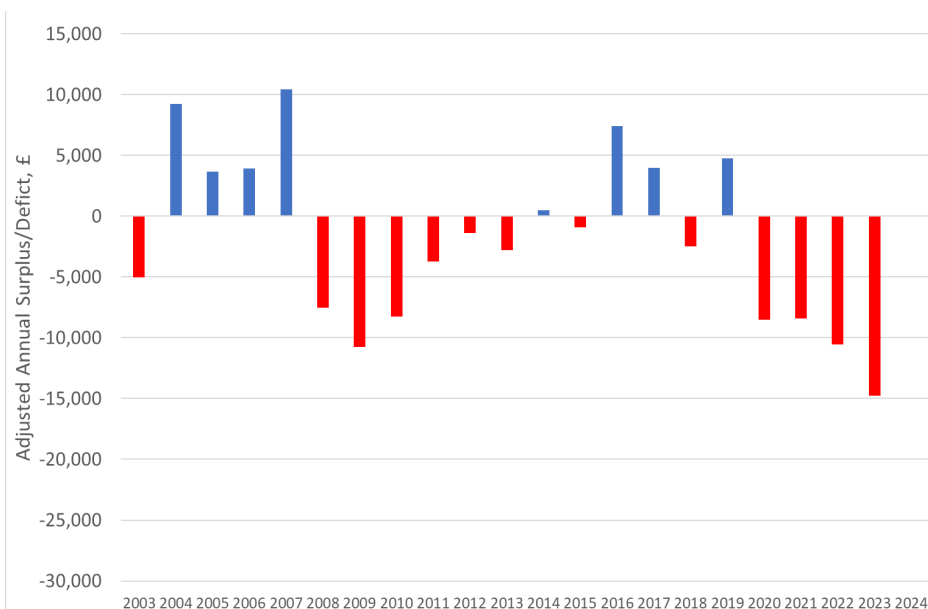
[jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com](mailto:jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com)

### **It's Good to Hear You!**

Our room at the Old Stables is a fantastic resource, widely used by the community – but we have had some problems when lots of people are at events and the volume of conversation gets louder and louder. Thanks to donations from South Oxfordshire District Council, the Whitchurch Parish Council and generous gifts from individual donors it has been possible to put acoustic cladding on the ceiling. Now the conversations are just as animated but there is less- "*What did you say?*"

## Parish finances feeling the strain

Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill have always enjoyed the support of a generous local community that goes well beyond the regular congregation and enables us to fulfil the ministry of the Church in our two villages. In addition, the creation of the Friends in 2017 has transformed our ability to maintain and improve our buildings and churchyards. But as the chart below shows, since the start of covid, finances have been under extreme strain. The chart shows annual profit and loss adjusted for the removal of exceptional items such as a one-off large donation in 2021 and the two projects it funded in 2022 (St John's path) and 2023 (painting St Mary's).



## The Whitchurch Art & Craft Exhibition 2024

The Whitchurch Society are very pleased to be holding this popular annual event again, in the Whitchurch Village Hall on Manor Road, on the weekend of 23rd & 24th November.

This is a 'live' format exhibition which is open for all current residents and ex-residents of Whitchurch-on-Thames, Whitchurch Hill and Goring Heath to enter. Plus children at local schools.

There are various categories – something for everyone! Our fabulous judges will be awarding cups for best exhibits in Art, in Craft, in Photography and for Film & Animation (New Media). There is also recognition for best first-time adult exhibitor and junior winners in four age groups too.

This year's theme for the special Joyce Voysey prize is 'Colours of Autumn'. You are encouraged to start thinking about how you might produce a piece of art, craft, a photo or a film which interprets this subject – but please remember that your entries for all the other classes can be on any subject whatsoever.

Details about how to enter will be available by the end of September on the village website and Facebook and look out for posters around the village later this year.

We will be hosting an Art Café in The Old Stables on Saturday 12th October to raise funds for this exhibition. We would love you to join us for a cuppa and piece of cake.

Save the dates in your diaries and get busy now with your... brushes, paints, camera, needles, glue, varnish, stamps, inks, wool, chisels, pliers, cottons, clay, pens, paper and lovely ideas.

We look forward to seeing your creations this Autumn.

Sally Woolhouse

## DIARY DATES

### JULY

- Tues 23rd 10.30am-12 noon every week **Community Coffee Morning** in the Old Stables.
- Sun 21st 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's.
- Wed 24th 8-9pm weekly **Compline Prayer Group** on Zoom (see p.18).
- Thurs 25th 10-11.30am **Ladies Bible Study** every 2nd and 4th Thursday.
- Sun 28th 9.30am **Worship for All** at St John's.

### AUGUST

- Thurs 1st 7.30-9pm **WOTSING Choir** at St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill.
- Sun 4th 9.30am **Parish Communion** at St Mary's.
- Sun 11th 9.30am **Family Communion** at St John's.
- Sun 18th 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's
- Sun 25th 9.30am **Worship for All** at St John's.

### SEPTEMBER

- Sun 1st 9.30am **Parish Communion** at St Mary's.
- Thurs 4th 7.30-9pm **WOTSING Choir** at St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill.
- Sun 8th 9.30am **Family Communion** at St John's.
- Sun 15th 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's.
- Sun 22nd 9.30am **Harvest Thanksgiving Service** at St John's. Time tbc

### OCTOBER

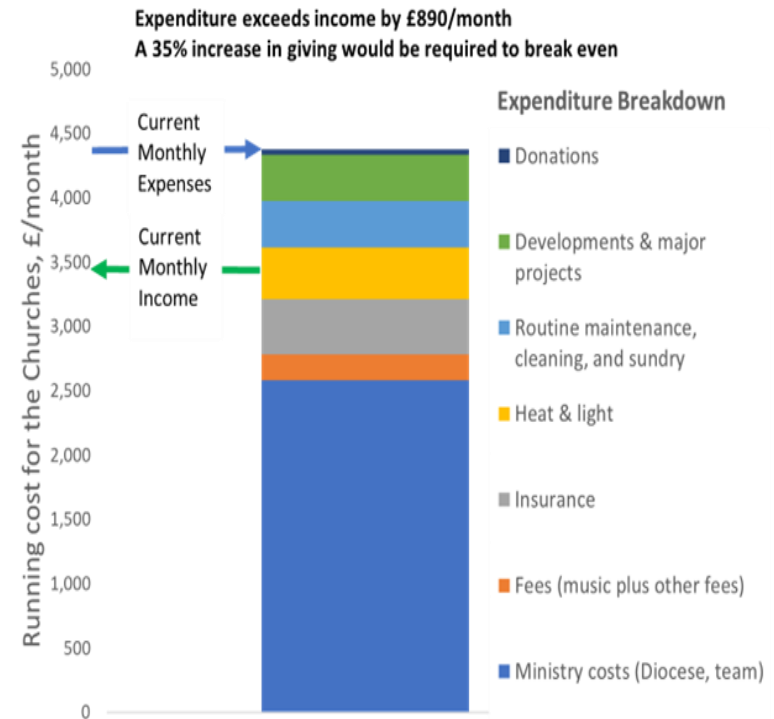
- Sun 6th 9.30am **Parish Communion** at St Mary's.
- Sat 12th 7.30pm **Concert at St Mary's**. See Village website for details nearer the date.
- Sun 13th 9.30am **Family Communion** at St John's.
- Sun 20th 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's.
- Sun 25th 9.30am **Worship for All** at St John's.

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## Income and expenditure

The income and expenditure breakdown is shown in the chart below using average activity for the period 2021-2023 to smooth out annual fluctuations. Average total income in this period is £3,500 and total expenditure is about £4,400, resulting in an average monthly deficit of £890.



Giving provides 75% of total income. But during covid, there was a net loss of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of donors or donor households. In addition, income has not kept pace with inflation, which is particularly noticeable since 2022. Average income/donor household at Whitchurch is now £65/month compared to Oxford Diocese average of £77/month/donor.

The largest single cost to the parish is the cost of ministry, followed by insurance and electricity. Ministry costs have not increased during covid, but electricity and insurance has. Current income almost pays for these basic costs, but leaves nothing for cleaning, sundries, maintenance or improvement. We are aware that the urgent work to repair the roof and replace the shingles on the spire at St Mary's is going to be very expensive, and we also want to support and develop new activities like the youth club, which has been so successful.

## Giving Generously

Whitchurch PCC has recently launched a campaign to encourage generous giving. The last stewardship campaign was held in 2011, which successfully increased income by around 30%. We have joined the Parish Giving Scheme, which reduces parish administration, speeds up tax reclaim and provides a nudge for inflationary increase in giving. We now need to increase giving by 35% to get the parish finances back in balance and would be very grateful for whatever financial support you can give us. Please contact Ken Baker our Church Warden and Assistant Treasurer for more information and/or a giving form, ([baker\\_kenneth2@sky.com](mailto:baker_kenneth2@sky.com)) or go to our website: [achurchnearyou.com/422](http://achurchnearyou.com/422)

## Summer Prayers

*Dear God, In this season of vitality, we pray for the gift of good health and happiness. May our bodies be strong, our minds at peace, and our hearts filled with joy. Bless us with the energy to embrace every moment and the gratitude to cherish each day. Amen.*

*Heavenly Father, Amidst the hustle and bustle of summer, we seek moments of rest and relaxation. Bless us with the ability to unwind, to find solace in the quiet moments, and to re-charge our weary spirits. Grant us the gift of peaceful sleep and rejuvenation. Amen*

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One of the most frequent phrases in the Bible tells us not to be afraid and not to be anxious. We can be afraid or nervous walking into a new chapter of our lives because of the unknown or we may fear certain people and situations. But amidst the fear, God promises never to leave us, nor forsake us, however bad things get. We tend to focus on worldly events to the exclusion of all else, but the creator of the swallow can fill us with stillness and peace whatever comes.

May God bless you,

Revd. Romey Poston



## ST MARY'S YOUTH CLUB

This summer term saw the launch of a Youth Club open to school years 6, 7 and 8 (ages 11 to 13) in Whitchurch. We meet in the Stables and have



acquired some equipment through donations: we have a Netball and Basketball hoop, a table tennis table, a Foosball table, and a Tuck Shop.

A member of our congregation has been baking cakes each week for the Youth Club. It has been very popular and really good fun.

Our vision is to provide a safe place for young people to meet under the banner of God's love, where we learn to live together in community. We are finishing the term with a Disco, and with running the Art Café on the 20<sup>th</sup> July to raise funds for the youth club. Look out for SMYC starting up again in September, for school years 6, 7, 8 and 9.





## The swallows of Summer and Alice in Wonderland

This morning I saw two swallows skimming across the lawn. It was beautiful. Seeing swallows in such graceful flight always feels magical, my heart lifts. But something inside feels still and peaceful too; it captures the ease of an English Summer.

June and July feel like the active months of Summer before the quieter days of August and we have so much to look forward to this month, football at the Euros, Wimbledon fortnight, rowing regattas locally and all the excitement of the Olympics. If the weather co-operates, it's an idyllic time to enjoy a feast of sport, picnics and barbeques, shedding our outer winter layers to relax with friends and family.

I discovered another event in July: the annual celebration of Lewis Carroll's classic, 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. I confess, I had never heard of 'Alice's Day', even though we live so close to Oxford. Apparently, Broad Street hosts giant puppets of Alice and the Jabberwocky, the Story Museum, the Bodleian, and the Botanic Gardens all have jolly 'Alice' events and you can even learn croquet at Christ Church. The whole town goes Hatter mad.

If I recall, Alice's game of croquet involved rose trees, pink flamingos and playing-card participants, in fact all the colour and ceremony of our traditional Summer 'Season' events with lots of dressing up and specific ways of doing things. But for Alice there is a dissonance, the rules are so confusing, everything is confusing. The book may start with an idle doze up a tree on a Summer's day, but life becomes unpredictable, not to say strangely alarming.

This summer has an air of Alice's game of croquet and the recent 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day reminded us that Summer was not always a time of ease. It's not just that we have the serious decision making of a general election (with all the uncertainty of what the result will mean, whoever wins) but there's also the dark backdrop of war in Ukraine, the ongoing ghastliness of all that is happening in Gaza, and growing tension internationally with fears of more conflict to come.

What do we do with this strange pull of emotions? We might be tempted to close our eyes to all the worrying things and turn up the volume on the partying but won't that mean we are even more unprepared if hard times do come?

## Some Myth Busting

### **The government funds the church!**

We're the established Church, so many people think that the government that pays for our church buildings. But it does not. We get no direct funding from the government. The responsibility for funding parish ministry rests with us: we need to support existing ministry and also invest for the future if the Church is to serve our children's children well.

### **The national Church funds us!**

The Church Commissioners support the ministry of bishops – funding their stipends, office, housing and working costs. Parishes also benefit from grants made to the diocese, such as the Strategic Development Fund, but the focus of the Church Commissioners' funding are the poor communities in the country which would otherwise not receive ministry support. The income of the Commissioners cannot cover all parish costs which, together with arch-deaconry costs, have to be met locally. The Church Commissioners meet the cost of clergy pensions earned in service until the end of 1997, with clergy pensions since 1998 being funded by dioceses.

### **We've lost the financial benefit from local church property and land!**

In 1978 local church land and property (the glebe) was pooled at diocesan level and the income from land and investments used to support the costs of ministry. It has meant that all the stipendiary clergy in the diocese receive the same amount, funded through the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, regardless of where their parish is based and how wealthy it is. Parishes are only asked to contribute about 60% of the total diocesan costs, (including clergy stipends and house maintenance); the rest are funded by glebe and other income.

### **The people making the decisions are out of touch?**

The majority of those taking allocation decisions for the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance are elected by parishes. Deaneries decide the level of parish deployment in their area, and distribution of parish share is worked out by the deanery and the local deanery synod. We discern together how we best serve Christ and maximise His impact in the world. Diocesan Synod agrees a budget each November for the next calendar year.

For more information see "On the Money" 20240531-doc-diocesan-finance-on-the-money-v01.pdf ([d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net](https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net))

## THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S AND ST JOHN'S, WHITCHURCH

The Friends is an independent charity to which we welcome members from all faiths and none.

The Friends aim to :-

- Help preserve the heritage of our two historic buildings in this Parish.
- Support the use of the churches by the wider community.
- Help bring together people from Whitchurch-on-Thames and Whitchurch Hill.

Work parties with a number of volunteers in both our churchyards continue to be carried out on a regular basis; general maintenance to both churchyards is essential to help to keep the grounds in a presentable condition. More work parties will be planned in the coming months.

The Art Café coffee meetings are held on behalf of The Friends bi-monthly on Saturday mornings. They are advertised on notice boards at the toll bridge and in the What's On section of the village website.

A successful Plant Based Eating course was held in Goring Heath Parish Hall in March and we also ran a successful bric-a-brac stall at the Whitchurch Hill Fete in May. These events all raised valuable funds for The Friends. Going forward, there are plans for another musical concert evening in St Mary's in the Autumn on Saturday, October 12th. Details will be advertised later.

All money raised from social events, membership subscriptions and donations will be contributed towards the maintenance, preservation and improvement of the two church buildings in our Parish, and their churchyards.

Projects that have been completed over the last 12 months which The Friends have contributed to include:-

- An upgrade to the heating at St John's Church
- Replacement microphone for the audio at St John's.

One major significant project which The Friends have committed to contribute to is the repair and replacement of the timber shingles to the spire at St Mary's. This work is now considered urgent and preliminary work is currently being undertaken to ascertain approximate costings. More details on this will be coming soon.

The other projects which the trustees have already agreed to support in principle are a replacement path from the lychgate to the entrance of St Mary's Church and the cleaning of the stained glass in St Mary's.

Paul Witcher, Chairman

[pvwitcher@aol.co.uk](mailto:pvwitcher@aol.co.uk)

June 2024

### Would You like to Help us with the Parish Mag?

Wendy Ferguson is standing down in July, after 11 years of producing the parish magazine and was thanked for her amazing contribution at the Annual Parochial Church meeting. Angi Simpson and Rosemary Pearce would welcome others to join the magazine planning group, especially if they have some IT skills and could help with setting the content. If you would like to find out more - no commitments - please contact Angi 0118 984 2592 or Rosemary 07761 056125.

From this month we are moving to three publications a year and these will be issued in March, July and November.