

**AGENDA FOR THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING and
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING sitting together
To be held at 7:00pm Wednesday 24th April 2024 in St Mark's Church, Wootton Bridge**

1. VESTRY MEETING

- 1.1 Prayers
- 1.2 Apologies
- 1.3 Minutes of the last meeting
- 1.4 Election of Churchwardens

2. ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

- 2.1 Minutes of the last APCM

3. STATUTORY REPORTS

- 3.1 Electoral Roll
- 3.2 PCC Administrative Information
- 3.3 PCC Secretary's Report
- 3.4 Treasurer's Report
- 3.5 Churchwarden's Fabric Report
- 3.6 Deanery Synod Report

4. REPORTS ON THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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- 4.2 Safeguarding Report
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- 4.5 Parish Archivist's Report
- 4.6 Music and Worship Report
- 4.7 Pastoral Report
- 4.8 Anna Chaplaincy Report
- 4.9 The Thursday Discussion Group Report
- 4.10 Children's Ministry Report

5. WOOTTON APCM CHAIR REPORT

6. ELECTIONS

- 6.1 Election of members of the Parochial Church Council
- 6.2 Election of Sides People

7. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. DATE OF NEXT APCM

**MINUTES FOR THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING and
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING sitting together
To be held at 7:00pm Wednesday 24th April 2024 in St Mark's Church, Wootton Bridge**

1. VESTRY MEETING

Harry Kirby introduced the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Prayer: Led by David McCulloch

Present: Ann Capps, Mary Peters, Harry Kirby, Steve Beynon, Sue Beynon, David McCulloch (Secretary), David Bennison, Pauline Kirby, Margaret King, Hilary Baldwin, Ed Hopper, Doreen Gazey, Helen Smallwood

Apologies: Mike Broadsmith, Bryan Pyner, Helen Davison

Absent: None

The minutes of the last Vestry Meeting were proposed by Steve Beynon, seconded by Pauline Kirby, and were unanimously approved by the meeting.

Election of Churchwardens:

David Bennison was asked to take the chair for the election of churchwardens, as Harry Kirby was nominated for election.

Harry Kirby was proposed by David Bennison and seconded by Steve Beynon and re-elected unanimously.

Mary Peters was proposed as continuing as Churchwarden Emeritus by Harry Kirby and seconded by Pauline Kirby and re-elected unanimously

As there were no other nominations, David Bennison declared the above churchwardens duly elected.

This concluded the 2024 Vestry meeting.

2. ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Minutes of the last APCM: The minutes of the 2023 APCM on 26th April had been previously distributed online and available to the whole electoral roll at both churches. **The minutes were proposed by Mary Peters, seconded by David Bennison, and approved unanimously.**

3. STATUTORY REPORTS for the year ended 31st December 2023 (except Electoral Roll Report)

3.1 Electoral Roll Report

There was a full renewal of the Electoral Roll in 2019, which provided the opportunity to re-create our parish contact database in an up-to-date and GDPR compliant form. The roll was updated following normal procedures from mid-February to early April 2024. Since last year, no names have been added to the Electoral Roll and four deaths from last year's roll were reported. Therefore, the current number on the Roll is 72. The Roll with the updated full details has been given to the GDPR Officer and placed in the safe. Two lists with name only details are displayed in the parish's churches.

David McCulloch

David McCulloch signposted the full renewal of the Electoral Roll next year (the last full renewal was 2019) and encouraged the parish to support elderly roll members to sign on again if possible.

3.2 PCC - Administrative Information

St Edmund's church is situated in Church Road, Wootton Bridge. St Mark's Church is in Station Road, Wootton Bridge. They are part of the Diocese of Portsmouth within the Church of England.

The correspondence address during the interregnum is the PCC Secretary's address: The Chalet, Seafarers Rest, St Boniface Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1NP.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with The Charity Commission.

PCC members

PCC members this year: **13**

Priest-in-Charge: vacant

Church Wardens: Harry Kirby: Mary Peters (Emeritus): Ann Capps is no longer able to continue as churchwarden and Harry Kirby was elected.

Readers: There are currently no readers in the parish.

Lay Preachers: David Bennison completed the Licensed Lay Preacher course in 2023 and has begun his ministry. His commissioning took place in April 2024.

Licensed Lay Worship Leaders: David Bennison, Steve Beynon, Sue Beynon, Hilary Baldwin

Rep on Deanery Synod: David Bennison (ex-officio) - Treasurer

Rep on Deanery Synod: Ed Hopper (ex-officio)

Rep on Deanery Synod: (vacant since John Terry's departure). No one felt able to volunteer as Deanery Synod representative, although churchwardens are allowed to attend meetings.

PCC Secretary: David McCulloch (also Assistant Treasurer)

Elected Members:

Hilary Baldwin – (until 2025)

Mike Broadsmith - (elected Deputy Churchwarden) ex-officio

Harry Kirby - PCC acting Chair (until 2025)

Helen Smallwood (until 2026)

Helen Davison (Honorary Administrator) ex-officio

Pauline Kirby (until 2027, see item 6)

Bryan Pyner (until 2027, see item 6)

Steve Beynon Safeguarding Rep (until 2025)

Sue Beynon (until 2026)

Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Objectives and Activities

St Edmund's & St Mark's PCC has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent to promote in the ecclesiastical parish of Wootton the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, social and ecumenical.

Churches

The Parish of Wootton benefits from two Church of England Churches. St Edmund's Church in Church Road was built in 1087 and was originally the church for the manor of Wootton. St Mark's in Station Road was built in 1909 with a large church hall annexe (currently called the Barn and used as an indoor skate park) and a coffee lounge.

Worship

The parish's normal monthly pattern of Sunday Services is:

1st Sunday in the month

8am Holy Communion (St Edmund's)

9.30am Sunday Brunch (St Mark's)

3rd Sunday in the month

9.30am Morning Worship (St Mark's)

2nd and 4th Sundays in the month

9.30am Holy Communion with Explorers (2nd Sunday only) (St Mark's)

6:30pm summer/ 5pm winter Evensong (St Edmund's)

5th Sunday in the month

930am Songs of Praise (St Mark's) – the parish successfully introduced this service in 2023.

For Sunday Holy Communion services, Common Worship liturgy is used. If a priest is not available, Common Worship Morning Prayer is celebrated instead, led by a Lay Worship Leader. Services are very occasionally changed to a 10am start for special occasions e.g. Easter Sunday.

The Sunday Brunch is a café-style family Service organised and led by a small team. It has a different theme each month.

Morning Worship on the 3rd Sunday ("All Age Worship") follows the structure of Common Worship, Service of the Word, but with alternative texts. It is led by a Lay Worship Leader.

Evensong on the 2nd and 4th Sundays follows the Book of Common Prayer (1662). It is led by a Lay Worship Leader.

The weekday Service at St Edmund's take place every Wednesday of the month (except for the 1st Wednesday) at 9.30am. The BCP rite of Holy Communion (1662) is used.

"Little Lions" was replaced by "Stay and Play" in September 2023 and is an informal community outreach group for young children (under 8) and their parents / carers. It takes place at St Mark's at 915am on Thursdays during term time.

"Café Communion" takes place on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 1115am at St Mark's.

This is a service designed to be accessible to more elderly parishioners who said they were finding it difficult to attend our normal Sunday services. Holy Communion is celebrated in an informal atmosphere. Lunch follows the service.

Fellowship

The parish was part of the Binstead, Havenstreet and Wootton plurality, which will officially cease to exist in 2024 after Binstead and Havenstreet joined the Ryde pastoral area. Wootton parish is working towards forming the East Medina plurality with East Cowes and Whippingham, and it is planned that this plurality will eventually have a single incumbent.

The parish is part of the 'Churches Together in Wootton' covenant with the Methodist Church.

Teaching

The children's Explorers group meet in the Coffee Lounge during the Holy Communion services on the second Sunday of the month. The group is currently being led by volunteers from the parish. Children's activities also take place within the Brunch service on the 1st Sunday of the month.

In previous years, the Binstead-Havenstreet-Wootton plurality has offered a Confirmation Course for young and mature Christians. The course was not offered in 2023 in Wootton as no one came forward.

Wedding preparation is provided prior to the service and is usually led by the priest leading the service, normally a PTO priest at the present time. Marriage preparation for individual couples takes place in the lead-up to their wedding.

Baptism preparation is done with each family, led by the priest taking the service. After

baptism, new Christians are encouraged to get involved with the church family – through attending Sunday services or by taking up voluntary roles.

The Discussion Group meets on Thursday mornings at the houses of those who participate in the group. They discuss Scripture texts or follow Advent and Lent courses provided by the diocese.

The “Big Mac Talk” is an ongoing course of talks held after the morning service on the 3rd Sunday of the month. David McCulloch speaks on various aspects of the Bible, particularly the historical context and theological message of Scriptural books. Questions and discussion between attendees is encouraged. Around 12 people currently attend the talks.

3.3 PCC Secretary’s Report 2023

This report describes and explains the PCC’s activities in 2023.

Finance

The parish began 2023 in a reasonably healthy financial position, with its parish share for 2022 fully paid. Advertising revenue from the Bridge magazine continued to be healthy and was fully paid into our account by early spring. With encouragement from the parish’s financial overseers, take up for the Parish Giving Scheme continued to slowly increase, although some people continue to give regularly by monthly standing orders. David Bennison and David McCulloch continued to work together on the accounts as Treasurer and Ass Treasurer, with Helen Davison’s occasional assistance, depending on her availability.

In the first part of the year, the dramatic increase in inflation, particularly in fuel, meant that a few thousand pounds more than had been budgeted for had to be paid to SSE to ensure that both our churches had at least minimal heating through the winter and early spring. This happened despite a grant coming from the diocese to support parishes to pay their fuel bills in a time of fuel poverty. A new contract was then negotiated to fix the gas and electricity prices at as low a cost as possible to the parish, but by the end of the year certain disputes about how much we should still be paying to SSE were outstanding and need resolution in 2024. Mainly due to thousands of pounds of fuel costs, the parish finished the year with a sizable deficit, and the PCC recognised that further attempts to improve the stewardship of our resources will need to be made.

David McCulloch was tasked by the PCC to work towards establishing cashless donations in our churches, and a machine was purchased in the late spring to be housed permanently at St Edmund’s (since many casual visitors come past in the summer) and occasionally taken to St Mark’s for special services. Unfortunately, the aim to get the machine running by the summer proved impossible due to a number of teething problems. Despite advisory visits by diocesan staff and technical input by Warwick Hammerton, the machine was still not in regular use at the end of 2023.

The PCC tried to offset the considerable increase in its fuel bills by increasing the charge to those who use our facilities i.e. the Barn, the coffee lounge and the church at St Mark’s. The monthly Barn Hire went up less than the Skate Club’s electricity payments. Generally speaking, the PCC approved an increase of 10% on our hire charges which was agreed to by the majority of those who used our spaces. A few regular users were unable to afford the increase, but they were replaced by others later in 2023. The year ended with the coffee lounge and church being regularly used throughout the week, and the diocese starting to use our hired spaces for Island Church training purposes, bringing in much needed additional income.

During the early summer, the PCC agreed to increase the wages of our cleaner by 10%. The PCC also agreed to increase David McCulloch’s salary as organist and church musician according to recommended RSCM rates, as these had not been adjusted for a decade. This resulted in an increase in the organist’s salary of about 20%.

Working Towards a New Plurality

The PCC's representatives (Ann Capps, Harry Kirby and David Bennison) continued to attend regular meetings with members of the PCCs of East Cowes and Whippingham to discuss a way of working together. By around Easter, an understanding had been reached in conjunction with Archdeacon Steve Daughtery that Wootton would not remain in a plurality with Binstead and Havenstreet, nor would be part of the future Ryde area. The parishes of East Cowes, Whippingham and Wootton would eventually come together in an East Medina plurality. Although this was not yet officially formed by the end of 2023, the PCC has decided that this will be the way forward for our parish.

In the first half of the year, meetings between representatives of the East Medina parishes were convened by Stuart McKerracher from Whippingham. He moved away in the summer, but our parishes' churchwardens and representatives continued to make progress together. Wootton parish formally left the Binstead, Havenstreet and Wootton plurality in the autumn and, with the Archdeacon's help, East Medina plurality began the process of advertising for an incumbent before the end of the year. The first attempt was unsuccessful, but further attempts will be made early next year, and making an appointment for an incumbent for our new plurality is recognised by the PCC and the diocese as a priority for 2024. The PCC recognises that our interregnum of more than 3 years has led to additional strains on our parish and its lay leadership in a variety of ways.

Buildings, Land & Fabric

The long-running saga of the grave that had been opened in St Edmund's churchyard finally came to an end when a faculty was granted to reseal a grave belonging to a member of the List family. No close living relatives were rediscovered, and Mike Broadsmith and Doreen Gazey were able to bring their dedicated work to a close researching the grave, searching for family members and applying for faculties. The grave was reconsecrated by Rev Len Fox in the summer in the presence of witnesses. By the end of the year, Mike Broadsmith had completed a grave plan of St Edmund's churchyard and its extension across the footpath. The PCC also addressed the need for appropriate but pastorally sensitive memorials for children's graves, noting in particular one that was not in keeping with others at St Edmund's but recognising that people's sensibilities today are different.

Two young people continued their work clearing and tidying the copse opposite St Edmund's as part of their work towards a Duke of Edinburgh's Award. One of these continued his work throughout the year lawnmowing, and generally tidying our green spaces. Concern continued to be expressed for occasional journeys by heavy vehicles in front of St Edmund's which damages the private road and could cause damage to the church due to vibration.

Stephen Capps, with the support of Steve Beynon, made ongoing repairs to the car park at St Mark's where their skills saved the PCC large sums of money. The PCC noted its ongoing thanks to both, but especially Stephen for everything he has done for us. The unusually wet weather in the autumn and early winter did cause some concern with leaks particularly at St Mark's. However, this is an ongoing problem with the high dormer windows and requires regular monitoring.

Safeguarding

Steve Beynon continued his work as Safeguarding Officer to ensure that PCC members were DBS checked. This was gradually achieved during the course of 2023. He was informed by the diocese that DBS checks for paid parish posts were likely to incur costs to the PCC, because the diocese was no longer willing to do DBS checks in these circumstances for free. In the spring, the diocese began to direct PCC members and those playing leadership roles in the parish e.g. churchwardens, Lay Worship Leaders etc. to attend face-to-face training sessions. However, these did not always take place as scheduled.

In the summer, a request was made to the PCC about a man who wished to use one of our churches to pray regularly, particularly to recite a quasi-monastic Office when he was available in the parish. After some deliberation and concerns about safeguarding, this was permitted, as long as it was made clear that he would lock the door of St Edmund's while he was praying to avoid accusations that he was an official representative of the parish, to ensure that the public would not disturb him, and ensure the safety of all.

At the end of the year, Hilary Baldwin realised that her work as Anna Chaplain and other responsibilities would prevent her from continuing as the parish Safeguarding officer. However, Steve Beynon was willing to replace her with immediate effect, and his experience and competence has given the PCC much reassurance, while the training requirements of the diocese for those in leadership roles continues to increase. The PCC greatly appreciate the safeguarding work that Hilary Baldwin did on our behalf.

Pastoral Activities

Hilary Baldwin continued her work as a licensed Anna Chaplain. A monthly service was set up at Solent Grange led by Hilary, David Bennison and Helen Hopper. Hilary's work gradually developed across Wootton through visits to individuals and to care homes in collaboration with the pastoral team. She has been in contact with the other parishes in the future East Medina plurality to encourage them to look for Anna Chaplains in their parishes, with the aim that they will work together for the good of the elderly across the plurality. Café Communion continued on the first Wednesday of the month at 1115am at St Mark's and was consistently well supported. Rev Len Fox volunteered to be the regular priest at these services and lunch is always provided afterwards, with people pre-booking if they would like to eat. The PCC particularly recognises the hard work that Ann Capps and others have put in to enable this new form of ministry to be such a success.

Parish coffee mornings were occasionally held at St Mark's hosted by Steve and Sue Beynon. The delicious homemade cakes that are often provided have great impact and numbers have been good when they have been able to be organised. The Mark's Brothers Men's Group continues to run successfully under the leadership of Harry Kirby, and this has developed into a cooked breakfast group due to popular demand!

It was recognised by the PCC early in 2023 that Little Lions was not being well supported, and changes were made. "Stay and Play" was launched when the summer holidays had ended on Thursdays at 915am and this has proved very popular. Some money was invested in providing new play equipment. Steve and Sue Beynon also attempted to start a Holiday Club during the summer holidays but this was not so well supported and has not been continued. Schools ministry, including a regular visit to the school to lead worship by a team of Harry Kirby, Steve and Sue Beynon and Hilary Baldwin, and visits from the school children for 3 services in the year including their own Christingle have gone very well, led by the parish's own lay ministers.

Miscellaneous Activities

The parish continued to support the School's Hardship Fund to safeguard the accessibility of cheap school meals for disadvantaged children, and regular collections were taken at the new Café Communion service, which were generously supported. At the end of 2023, this was changed so that the collections would equally support the School's Hardship Fund and parish funds.

Services continued to adapt to the post-Covid situation with the introduction to some or all the Brunch service taking place in the coffee lounge, and Steve Beynon being asked to lead this important family focussed service. The Big Mac talk continued to take place after the 3rd Sunday of the month 930am Morning Worship service. There was some discussion throughout the year about how reception from the cup should be managed at Holy Communion services, with some preferring intinction of the wafer into the cup by the priest

and others desiring that we return to the traditional practice of receiving from the cup separately. The PCC approved that drinking from the common cup should be permitted if a person wished, but intinction by the priest should be accommodated, and this is often the most common practice. The worship group continued to meet as required to discuss how certain special services should be arranged and ensure that good liaison in planning services between different lay leaders would take place. Rev Jonathan Hall joined our PTO priest team in supporting our leadership of Holy Communion services. With his, Len Fox's and Sandie Osborne's support, the parish has been able to continue to usually provide Holy Communion on Sundays twice a month, on most Wednesday's in the month at St Edmund's and Café Communion at St Mark's. The PCC expressed its ongoing gratitude to them for their time and ministry.

The PCC noted on several occasions throughout the year how expectations from the diocese about finding new officers for important positions to monitor health and safety, finance, taking bookings for the church and coffee lounge and safeguarding are proving harder than ever to find volunteers for. With the more rigorous expectations often made on parishes by the diocese in line with national expectations and the demands on the time of volunteers has shown that filling these positions can be very difficult.

The year ended on a highpoint with the service of Christingle, comfortably the best attended service of the year. The PCC noted how well planned, advertised and executed worship under the leadership of creative and committed lay ministers creates an enthusiasm for churchgoing that is still present despite the shock of Covid and was visible again after the death of Her Majesty the Queen, when both our churches were briefly open for prayer. The PCC continues to recognise that encouraging people's desire to seek and find God's presence wherever he comes to us is our prime motivation for the parish's ministry in our local community.

David McCulloch

Steve Beynon noted that three PCC reports were published online but were left off the agenda. David McCulloch apologised for the oversight, which will be corrected for next year.

3.4 Treasurer's Report

As in previous years, this report is a short introduction to the Annual Accounts of the parish, with the associated Notes, which provide the relevant facts and figures.

Sadly, our satisfactory financial results in 2022 did not continue into 2023. The operating (General Fund) surplus of over £3,000 in 2022 turned into a deficit of over £6,100 in 2023. The primary cause of this deterioration was a massive increase in utilities costs, arising from both general price rises and a billing regime in which a payment deficit had accrued only became apparent during the year. We were able to pay off the arrears and enter into a fixed price contract for the next two years, but utilities costs continue to represent a significant challenge. We also saw a further reduction in fee income, which was unsurprising as our vacancy continued, and there was a reduction in hall hire income during the year.

The bad news was that the deficit has left us effectively with no unrestricted reserves. The good news is that we were able to pay our Parish Share in full before the Diocese closed its books for 2023. Although costs are not rising as much as they were a year ago, it is already clear that paying our Parish Share in full this year will be difficult. Our smaller and older congregation is as generous as ever, but giving is holding up rather than increasing, and we have recently lost several committed givers.

We may be a small parish, but keeping church finances in some sort of order takes a lot of work. The task would be impossible for me without the support I continue to receive from

David McCulloch and Helen Davison. My most important task in this report is to put on record my thanks for all the help they give.

David Bennison

David Bennison summarised the accounts and said the parish was in deficit of more than £6000, almost entirely due to extraordinary utility bills. Our income kept up reasonably well apart from a loss of PCC fees from weddings and funerals. The parish share was paid in full. The Bridge continued to make a reasonable profit of around £800. We lost some longstanding givers as the finance officers predicted. It is likely that an incumbent will provide us with the support we need to put our accounts into a healthier condition. **David Bennison proposed the accounts should be accepted and Steve Beynon seconded. The accounts were accepted unanimously.**

Sue Beynon asked about parish share and its relevance to grant applications for support. David Bennison said that he would be following the Archdeacon's philosophy that the PCC's primary task is to keep the church open and then pay what it can afford up to about 50% of the parish income. A diocesan parish share re-assessment has begun but has not gone far yet. Harry Kirby thanked the finance officers who are working to provide the accounts and manage the parish's finances

Financial Review and Reserves Policy

The annual accounts for 2023 in the required format are appended to this report. It is the PCC's policy to budget for the ensuing year and to maintain sufficient cash reserves to cover the inevitable peaks of expenditure. Wherever possible, the Council seeks to set-aside funds (both restricted and designated) to meet the cost of large items of expenditure. The PCC Treasurer keeps the requirement for cash reserves under review and reports as necessary to the PCC.

3.5 Churchwarden's Fabric Report

It has been another busy year in the life of the parish and I am very grateful to Stephen Capps for his endless repairs and DIY projects including grass cutting, hedge cutting and drain clearance at both churches. Thanks also to Mike Broadsmith for staying on top of the official paperwork that goes with the maintenance of the parish.

St Edmund's

The regular tasks of hedge cutting and drain clearance have continued with additional grass cutting where necessary. In addition, Stephen gets called out to adjust door locks and replace toilet seats on a regular basis!

Two Duke of Edinburgh students, John Chambers and his friend Joe, supervised by John's father, David, continued work to clear the copse of brambles and other debris and this has let a lot of light in and we wait to see what grows. John and Joe have now moved to the sixth form college and are no longer able to continue with this work.

Many people help keep our lovely but very old church going:

The rose bed continues to look lovely thanks to Linda and Tony Redfern.

Tom King continues to do splendid work with the Garden of Remembrance and we are very grateful for his many years of work for the parish.

The cleaning team continues with their essential work.

We are very grateful to the team of people who unlock and lock St Edmund's on a daily basis, thus keeping it open for private prayer.

Thanks go to all those involved with the Friends of St Edmund's and the St Edmund's Church Building Trust, especially Doreen.

St Mark's

The two Stephens (Capps and Beynon) made repairs to the car park. Stephen Capps has replaced the wooden access ramp to the toilet lobby with a concrete one. The ramp in church also needed repairs. The two Stephens also repaired toilet seats and doors on multiple occasions.

Stephen Capps has repaired the window in the loft, but the final coats of paint were thwarted by an influx of tiny flies!

The St Mark's sign on the grass bank at the front has been refurbished.

The flower boxes have been beautifully cared for by Tony and Linda Redfern, but they have decided that the time has come to stand aside from this task. We are very grateful to them for all they have done over so many years. First impressions matter, and our flower boxes have been very impressive.

Ann Capps

Harry Kirby thanked the churchwardens who organise the maintenance of the churches, and David Bennison reminded the meeting of the importance of Mike Broadsmith's and Stephen Capps' work in maintaining and repairing the parish's fabric.

3.6 Deanery Synod Report

Ed Hopper and David Bennison attended regular Deanery Synod meetings over the course of the year.

Matters discussed again focussed upon the weakness Deanery finances, the expansion of mission on the Island with Anna Chaplains and the establishment of Harbour Church in Ryde, and the ongoing dearth of incumbent priests following retirements, Covid and while the new Bishop worked on his plan for the Diocese.

Archdeacon Steve Daugherty was appointed and, with his encouragement, there have been several appointments of clergy for the numerous vacancies on the Island. Wootton is now entering its fourth year of interregnum (a period of normally around twelve months) and the Archdeacon is aware of the extreme nature of our parish circumstances. Any priestly appointment for Wootton will be an appointment for a plurality with the parishes of Whippingham and East Cowes, and the parishes have been working together towards this.

Ed Hopper

The deanery synod report was updated slightly in the minutes from Ed Hopper's comments.

4. REPORTS ON THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

4.1 Church Life

We have much to be grateful for:

An advert for an incumbent for the proposed plurality of Wootton, Whippingham and East Cowes came out in December, but no one applied. To achieve this required a great deal of work from the East Medina plurality representatives, so we have come a long way.

Steve and Sue Beynon completed the course for Lay Worship Leaders and have taken on the leadership of the Brunch service, and other services and activities involving children's ministry.

David Bennison has completed the course for Lay Preachers and has started exercising his ministry.

Rev Len Fox and Rev Sandie Osborne continue to help us by leading services of Holy Communion at both churches.

Café Communion continues to be popular and I am grateful to the team of Rev Len Fox, Mary Peters, Hilary Baldwin, Pauline Kirby, Kitty Reeves and Margaret Errington for everything they do. Special thanks go to Margaret Frost who contacts and arranges lifts for everybody who wants to come. The donations from this service were given to the hardship fund for Wootton Primary school.

The weekly discussion group has moved from the coffee lounge to make way for Stay & Play and now meets in the home of a group member.

Our Anna Chaplain, Hilary Baldwin, is expanding her ministry across the parish.

The Schools Ministry Team of Harry Kirby, Steve and Sue Beynon has made strong relationships with Wootton Primary School, taking assemblies every month. The school came to St Mark's three times to celebrate Easter, Harvest and have a Christingle service

The Big Mac talk given by David McCulloch after the morning service every 3rd Sunday is popular and instructive.

Warwick Hammerton oversees our website and is our go-to tech guru.

Margaret King is everywhere – as sacristan, vergers and pastoral care leader.

Mike Broadsmith has looked after all the legal paperwork required for both churches – a big job, especially with the saga of the brick-lined grave!

Outreach

Mark's Brothers (bacon butt group) continues to grow under Harry Kirby's leadership.

Stay & Play has replaced Little Lions, with longer opening times under the leadership of Helen Smallwood, Steve Beynon and Sue Beynon. The numbers attending are growing but the group moved into the coffee lounge for the winter months.

Elephant Club is popular with elderly people from the church and the community. I am very grateful to the team of Cecily Matthews, Kitty Reeves, Hilary Baldwin and David Bennison who lead this group. Elephant Club also moved into the coffee lounge for the winter months. David Bennison, Helen Hopper and Hilary Baldwin lead monthly informal services at Solent Grange.

David Bennison and Warwick Hammerton compile The Bridge magazine and this is delivered by a large team to every house in the parish. David Chambers finds the advertisers who cover the costs of the print run.

During the year, I shed many of the jobs that had fallen to the churchwarden during Covid. I am so grateful to the people who have taken on these roles:

Pauline Kirby, who is now the 'housekeeper' at St Mark's.

David McCulloch who now does all the service rotas

Helen Hopper who is producing the regular prayer letter that goes out to the prayer team

Helen Davison who has taken on the monthly newsletter that goes out to all the congregation on email.

We owe a lot to David McCulloch who, together with David Bennison, has led many of our services this year. The choir is growing in numbers and their leadership with singing is much appreciated.

Karen Osborne, our Lettings Officer, quietly organises the increasing number of lettings of church premises which involves the practicalities of invoicing, the hosting of some meetings and the unlocking/locking of premises, where she is aided by Mike and Judi Thomas.

At St Edmund's, the indefatigable Doreen Gazey, ably assisted by Lynn Peppitt, continues to raise funds to help keep this very old and much loved church in good condition. Doreen has helped many people who are trying to trace their ancestors. Lynn and her musical friends have held concerts.

The Open Weekend was held in September. However, it is thought that this year's Open Weekend will probably be the last.

David Bennison chairs the St Edmund's Building Fund and we are grateful to him, the committee and the Friends of St Edmund's for all they do.

No matter how hard we try, we cannot stop the ageing process and it is with regret that Ann Jolliffe has decided not to continue with the jumble sales and the Big Breakfast which were held for the last time this year. Thank you to Ann for all you have done over many years for this parish.

Thanks must go to Harry Kirby for his role as chair of the PCC and to all the PCC members, but one person who must not be forgotten is Mary Peters! Mary agreed to be the second churchwarden when it was necessary to have two in order to apply for a priest. We have tried hard not to ask her to do anything more than she was already doing (which was a lot!) but Mary quietly gave us more, and I am so very grateful to her.

HOWEVER...

Our financial position is not what it was. Two of our largest donors have moved away from the parish and that, together with the enormous increase in fuel bills, have left us in debt at the end of 2023. This is something that has to be rectified before the debt gets out of control. We have bought a card reader but are having difficulties making it work in both churches. The hope is that the funds brought in by the card reader when it is working will help our financial position.

More groups, as well as the Diocese, are hiring our premises, and together with our existing hirers should help increase income.

Ann Capps – Churchwarden

Ann Capps told the meeting that she is very grateful and impressed for all that has been achieved in the parish.

4.2 Safeguarding Report

While there were no reported safeguarding incidents during 2023, there was a lot of activity in this area of our work. A new training schedule was produced by the Diocese outlining the recommended expectation for the range of roles within the Church community. While a number have undertaken the leadership training and other safeguarding modules there still remain a few courses to be completed by PCC or others undertaking specified roles.

The PCC considered the extended training expectations and amended their policy to reflect a more adaptable, yet responsible, approach. This approach ensures that anyone undertaking an activity with potential safeguarding implications is fully briefed by the PSO or Churchwarden and has an aide-memoire which they have signed. A record of these is kept by the PSO. This was adopted, by the PCC, as policy in September 2023. This policy is subject to annual review each January.

Steve Beynon

Steve Beynon confirmed that Harry Kirby needed to undertake the safeguarding leadership training now he is churchwarden. Mary Peters said that she was unhappy about renewing her training, especially online. Steve Beynon was asked by those present to encourage the diocese to make provision of more in-person training for the Island.

4.3 The Bridge Magazine Report

After a year of both developments and difficulties for *The Bridge* in 2022, last year was much quieter but equally successful. Print prices at least remained stable, and the layout introduced in 2022 successfully established itself as the new norm. Editorial content was as varied and as community focused as ever, and the reaction of both the readership and advertisers continued to be positive. The financial surplus of £857 was almost the same as in 2022.

As ever, credit must go in no small measure to Warwick Hammerton, whose responsiveness and expertise in keeping the layout consistent yet fresh underpins the continuing success of

the magazine. We are blessed that Warwick has become such a worthy successor to Trevor Wheeler in maintaining the quality of this most important piece of outreach.

Publication of the magazine would also not be possible without David Chambers' work in dealing with all our advertisers, the editorial material provided by our many contributors and the hard work of our faithful distribution and delivery team. We are most grateful to them all.

David Bennison

Ann Capps asked that David Bennison and Warwick Hammerton be thanked for their work in producing the Bridge. Pauline Kirby noted that more and more people are looking forward to reading the Bridge when she delivers it. Doreen Gazey commented that the Bridge is living up to its name by building bridges across our local community and between the parish and the village inhabitants.

4.4 St Edmund's Building Trust Report

There has been only one meeting in 2023 of the Friends Management Committee and the Trustees. There was also a separate Trustees meeting after the Treasurer, David Poore, retired. Linda Pitcher replaced him as Treasurer.

Projects: There are no specific projects but there has been ongoing maintenance work.

Fundraising: Open Weekend 2023 & Music Evenings

The Open Weekend Sept 9/10th 2023 – Theme – “Transport through the Ages”. Volunteers were recruited for the Open Weekend. I would like to record our grateful thanks to those who assisted with this event. We raised some much needed funds and banked **£135.87**

Attendance at Open Weekend: There were not as many people attending over the 2 days as we would have liked but those who came enjoyed it very much. It was hoped that having the date coinciding with the Ride & Stride weekend in September more visitors from outside the parish would visit, but this didn't happen.

Materials were contributed by the IOW Bus Museum, Andy Brown, John Castle and many others. Local photographers Viv Loveless, Danny Watson and Doreen Gazey displayed photos of local historical interest that related to the theme.

The church was beautifully decorated with flowers by Linda Redfern and the refreshments were served by volunteers.

Summer Music Evening 23rd June & Carol Singing 3rd December – The summer music evening was held in St Marks and raised £206.35, while the Carol Evening was held in St Edmund's and raised £175.37. Both were enjoyed by good sized audiences. Our thanks go to Wight Sax and 'Re-Buked' Ukulele Group whose members gave their time for nothing. Paul Marshall, the MD of Wight Sax and Lynn Peppitt, their Chair, organised the events. Precautions to comply with H & S regulations were taken at the events.

Annual Newsletter: A late Spring newsletter was circulated.

Membership: The Membership Secretary, Mary Shaw, has a very effective system in place and reports that there are **79** enrolled members listed. To date she has email addresses for a large percentage of the members which benefits the Trust by reducing costs and aiding efficiency. A monthly account spreadsheet is used, which shows the membership renewal payments and donations. The cash and cheques are banked monthly.

To comply with GDPR the membership records are kept on a password protected computer and a paper copy is kept in a locked filing cabinet. Those that relate to Gift Aid are passed to the Treasurer to enable her to claim Gift Aid back from the Inland Revenue.

Trustees 'St Edmund Church Building Trust':

The board of Trustees is in full compliance with the Trust Deed with 5 Trustees.

Finance:

'The Friends' have raised £517.59 through 3 events with more planned for 2024. Most members have made generous donations in addition to the basic membership fee of £5, which

accounts for a large part of our income. Sales of cards, calendars and miscellaneous items have continued, with a percentage of the profit being donated by Doreen Gazey which brings in additional income.

The Treasurer reports that there is £10,473.45 in the bank account as at 31st March 2024.

Lynn Pettitt

4.5 Parish Archivist's Report

Firstly, I would like to gratefully thank Stephen Capps for organising storage space for the archives in the church vestry.

I have been busy sorting out the archives at St Edmund's. However, because of weather conditions, work is progressing slowly. I am, however, rediscovering all kinds of interesting material. We keep copies of registers and census returns, information about local families and many aspects of village life and business, which is often of interest to local people.

Much of this information is useful for inclusion in our parish magazine. From back in 2008 when the magazine won a diocesan award it has continued to improve. This is a significant form of outreach. Magazine items about the village's past involve Wootton residents and in its turn results in all kinds of material and information appearing to the benefit of the local community.

My membership of the Local History Forum has been very beneficial. I have enjoyed it, learned a great deal and made contacts who have been very helpful.

One of my archivist roles has been organising an annual exhibition in aid of our church Trust for which our records have been invaluable, known as the "Open Weekend". Sadly, owing to increasing age and lack of manpower we probably will not be holding another exhibition like this. We certainly hope to find other ways to make use of our important village archive.

I had a number of opportunities in 2023 to add to the archive. These included:

1. A very good friend of mine died early in 2023. She had given me material and memories from the 1969 Isle of Wight Pop Festival with permission for me to make use of it at my discretion. As local history meant a lot to her, I intend to make the best use I can, especially since much of it is unique. So far Mathew Price in Newport has expressed interest in this archive, so I hope to cooperate with him on this project. Anyone else who may be interested in taking part, please let me know.
2. Another good friend of mine is hoping to find a home for her collection of costumes. Ideas about housing this collection are welcomed from local people.
3. Warwick Hammerton, whose work on the Bridge magazine is invaluable, is hoping to record memories from local people. Volunteers to participate in this are welcomed

I have noted that while working in the St Edmund's vestry, damp is visible. I suggest we look into acquiring a dehumidifier, especially as this is now where the archives are housed. Low energy ones are reasonably priced

I would like to thank Michael Broadsmith, who has been working on producing a map and index of the graves in both sections of St Edmund's churchyard. Since we regularly receive enquiries about the location of family graves his work will be an enormous help. I invited him to add his own contribution to this report about his work. My role has mainly been ensuring he has access to the records.

Doreen Gazey

St Edmund's Graveyards

Graveyard regulations require the parish priest and the PCC to keep an up to date plan of all burials and interments in the church graveyard. Up to now the western graveyard burial plan has been kept on a piece of linen which has become very worn and faded. The eastern graveyard plan, around the church, has been a small scale plan which is numbered and required reference to a long alphabetical list, which was kept elsewhere.

Both plans have now been transferred to printed A3 size sheets, two for each graveyard, all of which are held in a large plastic folder kept for easy access in the vestry. The eastern plans are accompanied by a shorter alphabetical list, while it is planned to produce a row-by-row list for the western graveyard.

I should add that the western graveyard is now full except for reserved graves, although ashes may be interred alongside the war memorial pathway. Fortunately we have been able to identify some areas in the eastern graveyard where new burials can be, and are being, carried out.

Mike Broadsmith

David Bennison added to the Building Trust report, noting that the Trust currently holds more than £10000. Doreen Gazey noted that new maps of the graveyard have made it much easier to find graves and memorials for families. She strongly encouraged the parish to maintain our records carefully. She encouraged us to buy a humidifier for St Edmund's vestry where the records are. She also suggested that we allow people to comment what information they want to know when visiting St Edmund's. Harry Kirby thanked Doreen for her work in organising and maintaining the archives and the trustees who support the maintenance of St Edmund's.

4.6. Music and Worship Report

The choir sing regularly at Holy Communion services at St Mark's on Sunday mornings and occasionally at special services. on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. Despite the ongoing support of our PTO retired priests in leading Holy Communion services, occasionally a priest was not available, and the parish organised services of Morning Prayer on those occasions, with the choir singing hymns. I also played hymns at the Brunch service and All Age Worship at St Mark's on the 1st and 3rd Sunday mornings of the month. At the beginning of 2023, the parish started experimenting on the 5th Sunday of the month with a Songs of Praise service. The music was chosen partly by members of the congregation, and partly by myself.

I played the electronic organ at Evensong at St Edmund's on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, but due to the small congregation at Evensongs, I sometimes led the congregation in singing hymns unaccompanied. I also played the organ at both churches for funerals, memorial services and baptisms.

Apart from breaks in August and immediately after Christmas and Easter, choir practices were consistently held on Thursday evenings. Due to my other commitments, we moved the start time forward to 6pm during 2023, and ensured that practices ended no later than 7pm. Choir numbers remained stable at 7, with attendance fairly consistent. A few members of our choir are unable to attend as often as they would like because of family commitments, but their contribution when present always enhances the choir. I would like to thank all members of the choir for their ongoing commitment and support.

I coordinated the planning of parish worship so I am responsible for the planning of readings, the distribution of music, and communicating with visiting clergy before they celebrate the Eucharist with us. Anyone who wishes to take part in reading at services and joining the choir is very welcome. I am convinced that a vibrant act of worship of whatever type that expresses who we are as a parish will be the best possible form of mission we can give to those who are on the margins of our parish community.

I believe that worship will continue to be important in the growth and development of our East Medina plurality. I was not able to coordinate joint services in our parishes in 2023 as I had hoped, but I was asked to take over the direction of Cantus Vesperi from September, and their involvement will help to develop high-quality music across the plurality. Cantus Vesperi sang Evensong on Pentecost Sunday at St Edmund's as well as an Advent carol service on the 1st Sunday of December, and both were very successful and well attended services. With the PCC's approval, I intend to book them again for these services in 2024. Cantus Vesperi

rehearse after Evensong services at St Edmund's, as this is a convenient time for us all to practise.

We continued the practice of having the Christmas Carol Service on the morning of the Sunday before Christmas, in place of All Age Worship. Holding it at St Mark's encouraged greater access for families and the elderly to this service. The choir also welcomed two occasional members for this occasion. The carol service was well attended and appreciated. Christingle on Christmas Eve was a highlight in the parish's annual worship and the church was again packed in 2023. The worship planning group worked on the morning service on Good Friday to include a combination of readings, prayers, moments of reflection and music which aimed to be as accessible as possible for a wide range of people. The services on Good Friday, Easter Day and Christmas Day were at 10am to encourage greater attendance from the congregation. Steve and Sue Beynon were asked to lead the planning of Brunch with a rota of people taking charge of activities for children. David Bennison's role as a Lay Worship Leader has been very important in our worship, as has the support of Hilary Baldwin in leading services. This team of people has enabled the parish to use the spiritual gifts of many of its members.

I have an ongoing concern about the state of the pipe organ at St Edmund's, since I rarely play it, but when it has been played it appears to be maintaining its viability well, and does not need major repair. In the wet weather we often experienced in 2023 there were some ciphers from the organ at St Mark's, but these have been dealt with promptly.

Lastly, I would like to thank the whole parish for their ongoing support to me personally and for their encouragement in planning worship. We should always give thanks to God for the gifts we have been given that enable us to offer a rich and varied diet of services to a wide range of people. I would also like to thank the churchwardens and PCC in the past year for their ongoing support and generosity, and for raising my rate of pay for regular and occasional services based on RSCM rates. I am confident that we will be able to show a future incumbent that the parish's lay leaders have been adaptable and promoted high quality worship during a long interregnum.

David McCulloch

David McCulloch thanked everyone for their support in worship and particularly for the choir in their contribution to worship. Several people spoke in favour of their gratitude to the choir for music leadership. The Bishop, attending a service on April 14th commented how a combined choir of St Mark's plus members of Cantus Vesperi had produced a sound of real quality.

4.7. Pastoral Report

Our very small team became smaller this year with the sad departure of John Terry from the Island. John was part of our team from its establishment and will be sorely missed. He also led the Discussion Group for many years and was a former churchwarden and regular "taxi driver" for those who needed help to get to church. We wish him every happiness being closer to his family in the future.

Other members of our team are Hilary Baldwin, our Anna Chaplain (see her separate report for a description of her work) and David Bennison, who leads our team ministry at Solent Grange care home offering a monthly service. Yvonne Gilbert is also a very valuable member of our team; although she is unable to attend services regularly she will always send cards to those in the parish who are unwell or who have asked for prayers or support, especially to those who may feel isolated and forgotten.

As the team is so small and most members of the team perform a variety of other ministries, I have not called team meetings in 2023. However, I regularly keep in touch with the team members. I also visit people, whether sick or lonely, and take Holy Communion to them if

needed or asked. If you would like to know more about what the team does or can offer help, please contact me.

Margaret King – Pastoral Team Coordinator

Margaret King thanked everyone for supporting the team, but recognised that losing John Terry's contribution was significant.

4.8 Anna Chaplaincy Report

The Anna Chaplaincy is progressing well and is developing into an integral part of the life of both St Mark's and St Edmund's. It is a person-centred ministry for older people of all faiths. The Chaplain attends the Holy Communion service held at St Edmund's every Wednesday morning. Although this is a small congregation, it is well attended by the senior members of the parish. She also plays an active part in the Café Communion service held at St Mark's on the first Wednesday of every month. This has become a very popular service with senior parishioners and the numbers of attendees is increasing. It also attracts parishioners from the parish of Whippingham, which can only be good for future relations in the plurality. The Chaplain also attends the Elephant Club which meets monthly, and offers a two-hour session aimed at providing stimulating activities for people suffering from the effects of early-onset dementia, and offers the opportunity for senior members of the parish to socialise together. The Chaplain also attends services held for residents at local nursing homes with other members of the parish. She also visits senior members of the parish who are in hospital and makes follow up calls on their return home.

The future of this ministry is still developing and will without doubt provide the support and care that this Chaplaincy was created to provide for our senior parishioners.

Hilary Baldwin – Anna Chaplain

Hilary Baldwin believes that the parish is progressing the Anna Chaplaincy Ministry in an appropriate way for our local community. Harry Kirby asked if anyone present at the meeting knows someone not already contributing to the parish who would like to join in this ministry.

4.9 Thursday Discussion Group Report

The Discussion Group continues to meet on a weekly basis but we no longer meet in the coffee lounge as we moved aside for "Stay & Play". The group has studied many things: NT Epistles, Advent and Lent courses, Old and New Testament books, and biblical themes. We find these times together extremely helpful in understanding our faith.

Ann Capps

4.10 Children's Ministry

2023 has been a year with much change in the children's ministry.

Explorers

Over the year there has been a reduction in the number of children attending Sunday Morning service and by the summer there were often only three teenagers present. At the same time our Explorers' leaders decided not to continue with our paid arrangement with them. We would like to record our thanks for all the support they gave over recent years. Provision is now made by volunteers from the congregation each second Sunday. We are grateful to these volunteers.

Little Lions / Stay & Play

The families attending Little Lions significantly dropped during June and July last year. The sessions on a Wednesday could not run every week as Café Communion was held each month (first Wednesday) which disrupted any sense of continuity. It was, therefore, felt that a rethink was needed. Some of the toys/equipment were past their 'useful date' and investment would be required. Thanks are due to Mary and Jo who helped over many years.

In November Stay & Play was begun with the offer of any children eight and under attending. This was an attempt to broaden the scope of the provision with childminders and home educators in mind. The start time was brought forward so that parents/carers with school age children were able to come straight to the session after school drop-off. A range of new and good quality second hand resources have been made available. Each session has a theme with art and food activities linked. Overall, the resources and equipment now available each week enable the provision to offer many, if not all, of the Early Years learning experiences that young children would experience in playgroup / pre-school provision. The sessions are actively promoted on the church's Facebook page with plans to develop a dedicated FP page in the near future. The response has been good with ten families now registered even if they do not all attend each week. We are grateful to the Thursday morning Bible study group for their willingness to find alternative accommodation so that the church is free for this activity.

Holiday Fun Club

A new initiative was tried during the Easter school holidays. This was to offer a range of activities to primary school age children for a few hours on one day of each of the holiday weeks. Attendance was low (less than 10) with some children choosing not to return for the second session. In an attempt to try again sessions were planned for the summer school holidays. Despite extensive advertising through email and the local primary school's newsletter there was no uptake. It was concluded that this type of provision does not meet need in the community.

Christingle

The traditional Christmas Eve Christingle Service was held with again a focus on the active participation of the congregation. There were well over 100 attendees with at least 40% being children and young people.

Steve Beynon

Steve and Sue Beynon noted that families in our local community were being encouraged to attend the newly planted church community in Ryde worshipping at All Saints, and their leader, Rev Heath Monaghan has told them that if young Christians had formed a strong community after three years, they would be encouraged to return to their local church. Stay and Play is restarting next month after a hiatus due to Steve's ill health, but will take place only once a month. Sue Beynon and Hilary Baldwin asked why our parish could not contribute to the church planning of ministry to young people in the Ryde area. Sue B had asked Heath Monaghan how they are trying to do things differently from traditional outreach to families with children, so we could learn from each other.

Harry Kirby noted that we tried to provide holiday clubs but they were not well supported. However, the meeting noted that both our Stay and Play and the ministry to Wootton school were well supported and resourced. The school act of worship that our school team leads is changing from the first to the last week of the month, and it is noted that the school often has excellent music that the children enjoy singing. We could use some of this music in our own services. Several times a year the school fills St Mark's for services and there was a recent school visit to St Edmund's to look at a traditional place of worship.

5 Chair Report

We have been in interregnum for more than three years. Throughout this period, we have faced many trials, tribulations and challenges, but most of all we have thrived. Words cannot express how moved I am by the commitment and dedication shown by so many to try to ascertain and do God's will in this parish.

One great challenge was the decision that we leave the "comfort" of a plurality we knew as it moved to the greater Ryde area. David Bennison, Ann and myself met frequently with the

representatives of St Mildred's and St James' to develop a mutual understanding and mutual trust as we moved forward with a possible new plurality. We had to identify two representatives to be involved in any procedure of appointing a possible priest to the plurality. The PCC agreed that David and I should take on this role. You will all be aware of the recent excitement that the PCC would meet a possible candidate for the post before he was interviewed. Then the disappointment of the person, for personal reasons, withdrawing. One member of the congregation said that we now had to start all over again. My response was that we continue "as normal".

But what is our "normal"? We have received reports from organisers of our church activities that reflect the many talents, skills and resilience of the people God has sent us as we needed them. It would have been easy to just maintain a "holding pattern" in the hope that soon an ordained person would come along and take us on.

We have been well supported by the local "retired", ordained members of our church family, especially Len and Sandie. Many thanks to you both!! We could not have managed without you.

We have been blessed with Ann's leadership as a Church Warden, her thinking "out of the box" and her ability to persuade individuals to volunteer for roles. We have also been blessed with Mary Peters, our other Church Warden, supplying years of experience and wisdom. We have a dynamic, forward thinking church community. We have been blessed with talented people being called by God, prepared to give up their time as we try to perceive His will.

If I try to name everyone, I am bound to overlook someone. Some are more obvious in their roles, churchwardens, choir master, worship leaders etc. Others work hard in the background.

Where would we be without our Verger/Sacristan? Who can even name that person?

Members of the "unsung heroes" of the church family; parish Administrator, ("Who's that?" you ask), Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer (again "Who's that?") Bridge folders, Bridge editor (Who?), general maintenance workers, tea and coffee organisers, cleaners, housekeeping suppliers etc. It's only when these key, behind the scenes, members of the church family are not available that we realise how significant and key they are in the parish's work. You may recall, a year or two ago, that Ann organised a get-together of our team. More than 70 individuals were identified as contributing to the well-being of God's church.

I am however concerned about the work-load that members undertake. We sometimes find it difficult to say "No" when asked to meet a need. We are aware of the support of the church family, but I am concerned that some will take on too much and will succumb to ill health and exhaustion.

We continue to pray for God's guidance, support, strength, resilience as we progress on this exciting venture of trying to do our best for Him. Each of the attributes of our church's members is key as we continue to thrive!!

Harry Kirby – Acting PCC Chair

Harry quoted Archdeacon Steve Daughtery as saying "you do what you can as you can". Our representatives have noted that there has been a considerable change of atmosphere in meetings with our sister parishes in East Medina plurality and there is now great positivity. Our most likely incumbency candidate left for personal reasons (so we need to continue to work with the diocese to seek an incumbent) but our parish continues to receive great support from our PTO priests. We have been blessed by Ann Capps' leadership as churchwarden and her ability to persuade and cajole, and by Mary Peters' experience and wisdom, and Harry thanked them both. Harry Kirby expressed his thanks at the "unsung heroes" of the parish and made clear that we cannot be complacent about the future.

6 Elections

PCC members: Pauline Kirby and Bryan Pyner were nominated and seconded to stand again as PCC members for a three-year term until 2027, and were elected unanimously.

David Bennison and Ed Hopper are prepared to stand again as Deanery Synod reps.

They were proposed by Ann Capps and seconded by Pauline Kirby, and elected unanimously.

Sidespeople: This has been discussed annually for the last few years at the APCM. David Bennison and Harry Kirby noted that we have a team of welcomers who greet people when they arrive at church and the meeting felt that this system was working effectively. No sidespeople need to be elected at the current time.

7 Appointment of Independent Examiner

Jonathan Lewis was asked by David Bennison to examine our 2023 accounts and he was happy to do this again for us, as long as it was a mutual arrangement. This was agreed between Jonathan Lewis and David Bennison and was agreed unanimously.

8 Any Other Business

Harry Kirby thanked Sue Beynon for providing refreshments for the meeting.

9 Date of Next APCM

The Secretary announced that the next APCM was scheduled for **Wednesday 23rd April 2025 at 7pm at St Mark's.**

This was later altered to **Sunday 11th May 2025, to begin after the Holy Communion service that morning has ended.**

10 The Grace was led by Harry Kirby