

**Annual Report and Accounts
for the Parochial Church Council of
St Mark's, Newnham**



**For the year ended
31st December 2024**

Message from the Vicar

As this is a review of 2024, I am something of a 'johnny-come-lately' to the party. I am grateful to the wardens and church officers who have made contributions to this report, to give a fuller account of the activities of our beloved parish over the course of that whole year. I won't repeat what others have written, but do want to write briefly, to reiterate that sincere sense of thanks, and to reflect on my first few months in post.

I am deeply grateful to everybody associated with our church, for all the efforts made in sustaining our life during the vacancy. I am very aware that it can be both demanding and a little unsettling to 'hold the fort' without a vicar, and to share the responsibility for appointing a new one! On an interview day for a vicar, both the congregation and the candidates are always advised that the process is as much about discernment as it is about self-promotion. Each party needs to ask themselves which path God is leading them down. I arrived at the Reading Room in Grantchester on St Mark's Day, the 25th April - precisely a year ago as I write - with an open mind. But very soon I felt at home (it helped that I was immediately served some decent coffee!) and had no hesitation in accepting the offer when it came later that day. The dedication and warmth which I encountered on that first day remain a feature of our parish, and it has been a privilege to take my place among you, and make new friends.

My ministry here was given the nicest of possible starts at my service of 'installation' (vicars are like boilers in that respect). The church was packed, the community well represented, the choir in typically excellent form, and the fizz was on ice. However, as excited as I was to get 'stuck in', there was very little grace period. The following Saturday I had not one but two parish summer fetes to attend, in Newnham and Grantchester. More seriously, our wonderful and long-standing treasurer Stuart Lingard died the same week. Lou Parmée, whom I had befriended when covering the 8am services in the interregnum soon followed. In fact there was a higher number of funerals than usual, as winter progressed, including many long-standing members of the congregation, past and present. It is such an important ministry which our church offers, and it has been greatly called on recently.

Another feature of my first few months has been the standing down of many long-serving volunteers. This was perfectly understandable, given the incredible service offered over so many years, and is quite normal at the start of a new ministry, as one chapter ends and a new begins (so I have tried not to take this personally!). Sue Wagner ought to be mentioned by name, for her years running the social team, including keeping the kitchen ship-shape. She signed off in style with a tremendous Christmas lunch at the start of December, and traditional refreshments after the Carol Service: both very happy events. She has our sincere thanks and, like Stuart, is hard to replace. But we move forward, adapting to what we are able to do now, rather than worrying about what we struggle to maintain doing. We have had to let 'Messy Church' go for this reason, as the number of volunteers went into decline (whilst still outnumbering the number of children attending). Every such situation is an opportunity to try something different, with the help of the Holy Spirit. I am hugely grateful to Sarah Perry for helping to form our 'hospitality team', as we work out the best way of keeping bellies, as well as souls, fed and watered!

Also stepping down at this APCM is Alan Jones, who has been such an incredible servant to St Mark's, as our fabric officer. The new lighting project, installed in time for my arrival, is just the latest of the many lasting contributions and improvements he has made to the building. We should also acknowledge Barry Read, who has done a great job as our safeguarding officer and with the Toddlers playgroup. There are others too, and I know I risk missing people out. It would be remiss of me however to not mention Bethan, who has passed her curacy with flying colours. It was good to have the chance for us as a parish to show our appreciation of her before she went on maternity leave. And we rejoice at the safe arrival of Samuel Isaac.

There has been so much to get up to speed with, across the two parishes. I am not sure we have even entirely finished unpacking in the vicarage yet! To do my job well one needs trust and wisdom, and both of these take time: they are earned, often the hard way, and there are no short cuts. Thank you for being generous in allowing me the time to settle and find my way.

Highlights of my brief tenure have included carol singing at Lammass Land, the tremendous turn-out (and participation) of local uniformed organizations for Remembrance Sunday, and the number of services done with Wolfson College, which is a relationship I hugely value and hope to develop.

Another highlight for me personally has been the sense of camaraderie which comes from having such a great team of colleagues, support staff and volunteers. Thank you to my wonderful wardens Nigel and Sarah; to Felicity and Xanthe, for their administrative support and guidance; to Marcus, our *maestro*, and organists Jonathan and Hugh. And of course to Sandi Buss, who was prepared to step in as our interim treasurer, alongside her 'day job' as treasurer to Grantchester Church. She has had to work tirelessly to update our finances, and get on top of the accounts following Stuart's death. As far as I am concerned, as the hapless new vicar, she is an angel. Another such angel (they are a frequent sight in Newnham) is Jane Plows, for her wonderful editorship of our parish magazine, 'Seek'.

Enormous thanks are due to Tom Buchanan, Andrew Hurst and Alison Rose, whose various ministries are so enriching to us. It is a real privilege for me as vicar to have the opportunity to benefit from their preaching and insights. We have also been blessed with two wonderful ordinands from Westcott House, in Will Moore (now a curate in the Diocese of Chelmsford), and more recently Adam Bak. Adam, who had previously served as a Roman Catholic priest in his native Hungary, has won many fans here through his humility and his humour, both on Sundays and at the Tuesday morning communions.

Speaking of camaraderie, I have been particularly encouraged by the faithful following which morning prayer has gained. I very rarely pray it alone, and indeed have connected with parishioners there who cannot make it on a Sunday for various reasons. I firmly believe that the most important thing we do as a Church each day is to open the front door, and then say our prayers.

Every year has its downs as well as its ups. Among them, we have had the pain of ongoing conflicts across the globe, and the fallout from historic failings within the Church to properly safeguard the vulnerable. We have just celebrated Easter. On the night before he died Jesus prayed that 'we all may become one'. His was a ministry of reconciliation, and it is the Church's mission to facilitate that, by enabling people to develop their relationship spiritually with God, and to open one another's eyes to our common identity and dignity as children of God, equally loved by Him. Looking ahead, prayer and pastoral care are our best response to the challenges we face, and they are greatly needed.

I also know there is a desire to grow the church, and especially reach younger people, in order to make our congregation more representative of our parish. We want to serve everyone. There is no silver bullet for this, but again we must turn to Jesus' climactic prayer. We can't do it without a commitment to work together as one. All of our committees and teams need to pull in the same direction, and not be too protective of our particular territories. For it is a higher cause that we serve.

So thank you, for your financial support, on which we are greatly dependent; and for your participation in our shared ministry, be that as office holders, flower arrangers, musicians, rota organizers, readers, gardeners, tidiers and brass polishers, preachers, committee members, intercessors, coffee pourers...the list of labours is endless, but so is His love, 'which urges us on' (2 Corinthians 5.14). And thanks be to God.

Jim

Worship and Prayer

A service is held in church each Sunday at 9.30am. This is a communion service apart from on the second Sunday of the month when the service is Morning Worship, and is usually aided by the parish choir, who rehearse on Friday evenings.

In term-time Junior Church takes place during the 9.30am service on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sunday of each month.

A service of Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer is also held in church on Sundays at 8am and on Tuesdays at 11am.

Morning Prayer is said in church on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 9am.

Electoral Roll

As happens every six years, this year a new Electoral Roll has been drawn up. At time of writing, with applications currently closed, the number on the new Roll is 104. This is a decrease of 1 from last year.

Felicity Parker

Churchwardens' Report

2024 began with the prospect of a new vicar being appointed for the joint parishes of Newnham and Grantchester. The hard work of overseeing the process was undertaken by Rosey Gardiner and Hilary Murray. A date was set to interview the three candidates who were shown around the two parishes and at the end of the day The Revd Jim Robinson was chosen by the four Parish Representatives, aided by the Archdeacon of Cambridge.

This appointment led to planning Jim's installation and the four Churchwardens spent a lot of time, with the input of Jim, the Archdeacon and the Rural Dean, to put together a service. This took place in St Mark's in early September, and was a great opportunity to involve other members of our local communities in welcoming Jim.

At the annual meeting last April Rosey Gardiner stood down as Churchwarden. We would like to thank her for all the hard work she put into the job. We were delighted that Sarah Perry took her place.

2024 also saw the completion of a major upgrading of the light system in St Mark's. I must record a huge thanks to the members of the Lighting committee but especially to Alan for the huge amount of time he gave to this project to the end. It has transformed the church and was in time for Jim's installation.

However once again it was the continuing dedication of you and of all St Mark's church family, which has proved strong in all aspects of the life of St Mark's, that keep this place a warm, loving and welcoming place. We are so lucky, so a big thank you to all members of St Mark's community for your faithful witness during 2024. One happy change was the growth of Junior Church, which is good news.

I'd like to finish this report on personal note and that is the passing of Stuart Lingard who was our Treasurer for many years. He looked after the Church finances so well, and when faced with a new project that entailed spending money, he was a wonderful combination of wise caution and enthusiastic support. He is greatly missed.

So God bless you all.

Nigel Porter and Sarah Perry

Eco Church

The Eco Church Team have worked this year towards the A Rocha Eco Church Gold Award as well as continuing the other activities we have engaged with in previous years – fair stall, clothes swap, linking with Newnham Croft School Eco Committee and more. We hope to mark Creationtide again in September.

The main highlight was we scored enough points on the indicative questionnaire following the lighting project to apply for Gold. We met with assessors in March to discuss our application. The feeling was that we excelled in the Land and Worship categories but still had a way to go with the Buildings, Community and Global, and Lifestyle sections. Things like creating a plan for achieving Carbon Net Zero, updating our website and noticeboard presence and undertaking surveying of actions were among the suggestions. If anyone is interested in seeing more of the report they wrote and helping to work on these categories I am sure they would be very much welcomed by the Team.

Bethan Rodden

Education and Discipleship

The E&D group is currently composed of Mike Thompson (chair since December 2024), Jeremy Begbie, David Keeble, Jim Robinson, Eleanor Toye ScoJ and Tim Verney. We are grateful to our former members (Richard Bauckham, Hannelore Hägele, Bethan Rodden and Debbie Whitton Spriggs) and for Jeremy's wise leadership over the years; thankfully he continues to be a member. More members are always welcome!

Our three regular home study groups (Monday mornings and Tuesday & Thursday evenings) continued to meet and thrive this year. The small home group on basic Christianity led by Mike that began in 2023 continued for a few weeks into 2024, based on the first booklet in the CofE 'Pilgrim' course.

The 'Pilgrim' series booklet proved such a good basis for starting discussions in the basics group that the E&D group decided to ask our three home study groups and Mike's basics group to use a module in the 'Pilgrim' course on the Creeds as their basis for meetings during Lent, with parishioners invited to participate in these groups as able. This appeared to work well.

After Easter, we had a series of Wednesday evening talks that had limited attendance, but those who came were very appreciative. The session led by the Archdeacon of Ipswich The Very Rev Rhiannon King (now bishop of Southampton!) was particularly excellent.

The holdings of the parish library were updated and published on the church website in the 'St Mark's Library' link under 'Church Life'.

A proposed Autumn retreat to be led by James Shakespeare and the arrangement of a special speaker for Creationtide did not take place because of the transition period with a new vicar. After a hiatus of six months during the transition period a newly reconstituted E&D group with the current membership had its first meeting in December with Jim Robinson to hear his vision for Christian education and to begin planning for 2025. It was decided that for Lent 2025 we would have a series of four Sunday afternoon sessions in church based on C.S. Lewis's classic *The Four Loves*.

Mike Thompson

Visiting Group

Within the group are people who have listening skills, empathy, a good knowledge of local services and activities, plus an appreciation of the need for discretion and dignity towards anybody who is sick, lonely, or unhappy for any reason. We support each other, encourage socialising and friendship, and help with transport when possible. There has been an increase in numbers attending the 11am Tuesday Communion service.

Margaret Banks

Community Centre

The Community Centre continues to be a wonderful resource for the Church and a means by which we can engage with our parish. The Toddles 'stay and play' group, run largely this year by Church volunteers Amanda, Barry and Angela, provides a space for local pre-school children to play together, and their parents and carers to socialise. It is a happy gathering. A full programme of classes and activities, from ballet to life-drawing, drama to Italian, run by outside hirers, brings in a wide variety of people. Our administrator Xanthe does a great job overseeing these regular bookings, as well as more occasional ones; and every house in Newnham receives three times a year a copy of 'What's On', which publicises the opportunities available. Enormous thanks are due to the committee for playing their part in running the hall, and particularly to David Keeble, for buying in supplies, and coordinating the delivery of What's On. Thank you also to Peter Hampson for editing it and to our team of postmen and women.

Arts and Events

The Arts and Events group presented an afternoon of words and music for Epiphany (*Let There Be Light*) on Sunday 5th January. This was well supported, considering the poor weather. It was something of an experiment to do this on a Sunday afternoon (rather than, say, on a Friday or Saturday evening). It might be worth repeating the experiment for future events. What do people think? Thanks are due to both readers and musicians for bringing some light to a gloomy January.

Future events

We are looking forward to another Desert Island Picks in the Community Centre on Friday February 7th at 7.30 pm. Our guest this time will be the Rev. Jim Robinson.

In March (Friday 14th at 7.30 pm) we are bringing Murray Watts' latest play to St Mark's. It's called The Beloved Son and tells the story of the Dutch Catholic priest Henri Nouwen. It will be performed by Andrew Harrison. Those who remember Andrew's previous visits, with plays about Darwin and Faraday, will know this is something to relish.

Several possible events are being discussed by the group. Among them is a revue for and by the people of St Mark's. This would be a kind of Newnham's Got Talent but without the element of competition. Its success will depend on members of the congregation offering to perform – readings, recitals, musical items, juggling, magic tricks, sketches and so on. It could take place in the large hall and on 8th June, though these details are yet to be confirmed.

Notes

The best way of letting people know about these events is through word of mouth, so do please spread the word about Desert Island Picks and The Beloved Son.

When we were preparing for the Epiphany event, we found that the standing mic, which plugs in by the chancel steps, wasn't working.

For several of our events (for example The Beloved Son) it's necessary to put up the temporary staging. It would be really helpful to have a small team of volunteers prepared to both manage the process and do the lifting and carrying.

A and E team: Barry Domvile, Hannelore Hagele, Lizzy Jarvis, Shevanti Roser, Mike Thompson, Wendy Walford, Nick Warburton

Safeguarding

Safeguarding all who are involved in parish activities continues to be a priority for the PCC. It is a standing agenda item which is reported on at each PCC Meeting. We continue to be mindful that our policies and procedures remain up to date and follow national models approved by the House of Bishops. The National Safeguarding Team has created a range of safeguarding learning pathways for people with roles within the Church of England to complete. Much of the safeguarding training will stay the same; the main change being to some leadership roles which we are currently working our way through. It is now also a requirement that we renew our training every 3 years along with all Disclosure and Barring Service renewals.

Fabric

2024 has been a year of Growth and Loss. Growth because of the completion of the new church lighting. Loss because of the death of our superb church treasurer Stuart Lingard whose consistent support for improvements to church and community centre was remarkable.

From brief to completion the new lighting took almost 3 years. 9 church members contributed to the Lighting Working Party who selected designer and contractor. The work was

completed on time and with a budget of just over £ 40,000. No cost fell on church funds due to the generosity of supporters. Our aspirations have been met and our electricity costs reduced.

No major work has been needed in the Community Centre, but a more responsive heating engineer has been appointed and the troublesome door lock dealt with by a superior and more expensive model.

Alan Jones

After 33 years and spending over half a million pounds on our behalf Alan Jones is stepping down from his role as Maintenance Officer for Church and Community Centre. Roy Murray has already taken over grounds and gardens with great elan, Jonathan Hellyer-Jones will take over the organ and Chris Hammond the boiler. The role of Fabric Officer accountable to Vicar and Archdeacon will revert to the Churchwardens, the normal arrangement. Alan has agreed to finish the work on the Narthex and the NE doors.

Deanery Synod

The Ely Diocese is divided into deaneries and St Mark's and Grantchester are part of Cambridge South deanery. The Deanery Synod is a gathering of the clergy and two lay members from each church. Meetings usually feature a guest speaker.

In 2024 there were three meetings, when there was a chance to share news and ideas with each other, to have a regular financial report from the treasurer on the Parish Share, and to learn about developments in the Diocese and Ely Cathedral.

Date	Host church	Guest speaker	Topic
February	St Mark's, Newnham	Revd Tim Hall	Citizen UK
May	St Andrew's, Chesterton (joint meeting with Cambridge North Deanery)	Revd Mark Rodel, Diocesan Development Officer for Learning	Open Christian Learning and services and advice available
November	St Andrew's, Cherry Hinton	Francis Burkitt (Grantchester), Lay Canon, Ely Cathedral	The Working of Ely Cathedral We were all asked to encourage everyone to visit the cathedral to see all it has to offer and see the results of the £1.3million lighting refurbishment!

Deanery and Diocesan development plans were discussed with emphasis on plans for new housing developments, the homeless and more support for Parishes.

The South Cambridge Deanery as one of the more wealthy deaneries has allocated £25,000pa for three years to the CCHP. At the May meeting it was announced that The Revd Kristian Hewitt had been appointed as the new Bishop's Officer for Homelessness.

It has also been announced that the new Bishop should be appointed early in 2026!

The meetings are usually interesting and more information is available in the minutes.

Margaret Banks