

**Annual Report
of the
Parochial Church Council
for 2023**

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RECTOR'S REPORT

*As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another.....as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And **be thankful**. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Colossians 3:12-17

Reading everyone's contributions to this annual report, there is so much to be thankful for as we reflect on how God has been at work in and through the Arden Marches churches this past year. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way to our shared life and witness and service. Special thanks from me to our churchwardens Alan and Phil for their faithful leadership and for their support for me, and to Judith for her admin support.

Morton Bagot and Oldberrow have their own APCM, but they are an important part of the body of Christ here, and I just want to acknowledge them now and thank God for their witness, ministry, fellowship and service as part of Arden Marches.

Worship

Our pattern of worship did not change significantly in 2023, we continued to offer quite a range of services to help different people meet with God:

Mappleborough

1st Sundays - Morning Worship has been replaced with a trial in Ankcorn House of a relaxed discussion-based service to help us enjoy the Bible together more deeply

2nd Sundays - Holy Communion for All – a simple family-friendly service

3rd Sundays – the very popular Café Service

4th Sundays – Holy Communion

Studley at 10am

1st Sundays – a simplified Holy Communion

2nd Sundays – Prayer and Praise – a relaxed, magazine-style service

3rd Sundays – Open the Bible – a chance to go deeper into a Bible passage

4th Sundays – Worship for Everyone – intergenerational interactive worship

A really significant development has been Laurence Nicholas leading music at Studley 10am services with skill, energy and enthusiasm. He gathered a splendid choir and orchestra for festivals.

Messy Church is on 3rd Sundays in the Parish Centre. There is also 8am Communion twice a month, and 6pm Communion in the Parish Centre on third Sundays.

Until Spring 2024 we offered weekday Morning Prayer on Facebook which sustained people in and beyond the congregations through and after the pandemic.

Guy Allen has led several Forest Church experiences over the year.

Many people are involved in preparing, leading and enabling our worship – thank you very much to everyone who gives their love, time and skills.

Life Events

In 2023 we had the privilege of conducting the following services:

	<u>Mappleborough</u>	<u>Studley</u>	
Baptisms	7	12	
Weddings	2	-	
Funerals	3	12	plus 4 funerals at the crematorium

Many thanks to the vergers, John Parker the organist, administrators and ministers for making these services very special for the families.

Very sadly we our funerals included those for much loved members of our congregations including Eric Lee, Val Greathead, Jill Beard, David Harris, John Evans and Enid Thomas.

Growing in Faith

We have continued to offer the **Alpha Course** to introduce people to Christian faith, midweek **Life Groups** to support each other in living out our Christian lives and growing as Christians, and our **1st Thursday prayer time** to undergird all our activities with prayer.

Social and outreach events

We offered lovely hospitality and good fun through events such as teas in churches, quizzes, classic cars gathering, Mappleborough Mini-Fest, and a Rock Choir concert.

Connection and inspiration beyond the parishes

We have continued a slight connection with both Amasango School in South Africa and Scargill House in North Yorkshire, with church members visiting both places in 2023, and we belong to the Community of the Cross of Nails.

Growing Healthy Churches

This was a big focus in 2023. Clive Hicks helped us do a Natural Church Development survey, and worked with us to identify and address things to help us to grow. This involved an Arden Marches church day in June, and subsequent work by the PCC/DCCs.

We identified the need to

- ‘Open the Front Door’ and help people overcome the hurdles to discovering and joining us
 - Improve our publicity and communications
 - Open up the driveway, and invite people to events at Mappleborough
 - become more invitational, and deepen friendships at Studley
- ‘Breathe In’
 - inspiring worship at Studley
 - enjoying the Bible at Mappleborough
- Affirmation of people at Studley
- Identify and release people’s gifts

I hope that as you read this report you will see that in all that we have done we have sought to hold on to our missional values:

- Prayer: living out of a still centre, rooted and grounded in the love of God
- Relationships: cultivating homespun family-feel communities that foster deep relationships
- Hospitality: offering relaxed, bespoke hospitality to those who come to us
- Outreach: being visible and active in our local community

and to ‘do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.’

Kate Mier

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT 2023-24

This year we have had 13 additions to the Electoral roll and 19 deletions of members who have died or moved away.

As of 8th April 2024 the total number on the Electoral Roll is 140 : Studley 90 and Mappleborough Green 50.

Judith McLelland

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT – 2023

Church of the Holy Ascension - Mappleborough Green

The past year has been a mixture of routine and some one-off items. One of the routine activities, but nevertheless very important, is our Sunday services. Thank you to all who contribute to these in any way, whether it is in the planning, actual running of the services or the preparation that goes into planning an hour or so of worship on a Sunday morning. As with many things in church, the services depend on more than just the people we see at the front of church, although their contribution is extremely important. But the things that we don't necessarily see are the cleaning of the church, preparation of the flowers in church, preparing and playing the music, selecting hymns and readings, arranging rotas to ensure that people are notified of duties. So, a huge thank you to all of the people who plan, lead, preach, clean, welcome, operate the sound system, provide music, refreshments, floral decorations, arrange the church layout for each service and carry out routine maintenance. A special thank you to Kate, Judy and Alan Tostevin for their work as our clergy, doing those many things that the laity cannot do. Our clergy are a small team and the pressure on them from all of our churches is considerable. Outside of the church thank you to our contractor and the volunteers who come along to maintain the grounds and keep them looking so beautiful

A one-off item in the past year was the quinquennial inspection which saw the church get its five yearly check-up. The inspecting architect has given us a report that highlights any work that needs doing and suggests when those items should be actioned over the next five years. The DCC have been given an outline of the items and will be reviewing the schedule of works and progress at each DCC meeting. Here I would just like to say another thank you and that is to members of the DCC who serve our church in making plans for the running of the church and ensuring that things run smoothly. The DCC is very much like the management team of a company.

Other one-off tasks have included the jet washing of the pathway by the pumphouse and Ankcorn House car park, both of which were badly affected by moss and were dangerous when wet. We also had the footpath between the church and the pumphouse footpath, as it had started to seriously break up and was a serious trip hazard. The old path was removed, a new base laid, concrete kerbing put in place, along with an Aco drain to take away water draining from the field next door to church. A new tarmac surface was then laid and this is a welcome addition ensuring that people can move safely from church to Ankcorn House.

The annual portable appliance testing, fire extinguisher certification, boiler servicing, both for church and Ankcorn House, and organ tuning have been carried out,

My thanks to my two deputy churchwardens, Linda Salisbury and John Styler, for their dedication and support through the past year. In addition, thank you to Linda for looking after Ankcorn House, arranging bookings and keeping it clean. Also, thanks to both Linda and John for organising the regular grounds maintenance work parties.

Another thank you goes to all who organise, run and support our fundraising events through the year. We had another successful Harvest Supper that was enjoyed by all who attended. Thank you to our congregation for your regular attendance at services and for your giving to support the church. In the autumn we had a successful Advent Gift Day and on Christmas Eve we had our Christingle which was very well attended. Our Christmas Day service was also well attended. We have continued to have our monthly coffee mornings at Mappleborough Green Garden Centre, which is an opportunity to meet up for a chat and some fellowship. It is usually on the third Thursday of the month and all are welcome.

Alan Greathead - Churchwarden

The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Studley

As you will see from this report and reports from church groups there has been a great deal of work put into the life of the church to build relationships, to make our Sunday Services appropriate for all ages and in reaching out in several ways to serve the local community.

Sunday Services - As a result of the congregations' response to a questionnaire about the pattern of 10.00am Sunday services introduced in 2022 some changes were made with 'Going Deeper' changed to 'Opening the Bible' on 3rd Sundays and the format of the 4th Sunday Service was changed to a 'Worship 4 All' style of service. The aim of all the services is to provide an opportunity for all ages to engage with in worship. Changes have been made to the front of the South Aisle to provide an area with activities for young children which appears to work well for the small number of families that attend. Provision for older children on 1st and 3rd Sunday's and for young people on 2nd Sunday's, held in the Millennium room are both in the embryo stages but have started well. A dedicated small group led by Kate continue to plan and lead our 10.00am services.

The development of the music ministry has been uplifting. The Easter Day, Harvest Festival and Carol Service were highlights of the year with talented musicians and singers taking part in the Services.

Our regular 8.00am Communion services and the monthly 6.00pm Communion service at the Parish Centre continued throughout the year providing a quiet space for worship, fellowship and hospitality.

We have welcomed visitors staying at Studley Castle to both the 8.00am and 10.00am services. Many of them express their appreciation for the warmth of the welcome they receive and the opportunity to share in worship with us. The numbers of people attending our services is in line with 2022, we were pleased to welcome new people into the Church Family during the year.

Open doors – now that the church is open every day, we do receive plenty of visitors, people from the local community and visitors to the area. It is encouraging to read the comments in the visitor's book from people who find the church and our well cared for churchyard peaceful places where they can take time away from the busyness of everyday life to reflect and experience God's peace. In addition to Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals we have also had the opportunity to 'open our doors' for Church School visits, for the Beavers, Rainbows and visiting Bell Ringing teams. Thank you to the small team who open and lock the church each day. If you can help by volunteering to lock the church at 4.00pm on either a Monday or Friday on a regular or occasional basis your help would be appreciated.

Church Values in Action – It is amazing the amount of work often by small groups of people that has gone into endeavouring to fulfil our 'Church Values' during the past year. Meeting regularly for prayer on the 1st Thursday in the month, building relationships by cultivating homespun family -feel communities that foster deep relationships through life groups and other church groups. Offering relaxed bespoke hospitality at our Sunday Services and other church gatherings and reaching out being visible and active in our local community through Messy Church, Sunbeams, Super Bowls, Tea, Cake and Fellowship, Dementia Café, participation in Foodbank and occasional Church and Village social events.

Church Building– The buildings group have been busy caring for the building and its users during the year with monthly safety checks, the annual/half yearly servicing of equipment and minor repairs completed. Following an independent survey the audio system was upgraded in January with new digital equipment including a new induction loop system amplifier.

Repairs to the roof were completed in the spring.

Earlier in the year a faculty was granted to re-order part of the South Aisle to create the Family Area including a new carpet and new display boards which will be completed in the Spring.

Runners for the pews in the north and central aisles together with new altar kneelers arrived in time for our Christmas Services thanks to a generous donation.

As a result of a survey asbestos panels were found in the boiler house which will have to be checked for damage annually.

We ended the year with a Quinquennial Inspection which highlighted areas of the building in need of repair, the most urgent of these, which is in hand being repairs to the tower where there has been evidence of falling masonry.

Studley Church is blessed with a good team of people who willing give of their time, talents, and energy in service. Thank you to our Rector Kate for her leadership and hard work and to all who contributed in any way to the life our church and its task of taking the GOOD NEWS of the gospel out to our community and

beyond during the past year. Also thank you to everyone who has supported me personally during the past year your help is very much appreciated.

Phil Pattison - Churchwarden

STUDLEY WITH MAPPLEBOROUGH GREEN PCC REPORT

The PCC as a body continue to make important decisions on behalf of Studley with Mappleborough Green Parish and will discuss and action any business or legislation directed from the Diocese. There have been three PCC Meetings since the last APCM with each attended by 11 members out of a possible 13.

Items typically reported on and discussed at PCC:

Leadership and Mission, including Clergy wellbeing, Family Link Worker, Anna Chaplaincy, Arden Marches Forums, Rector's Report, Youth Work funding, matters of concern to the Church of England, Finance, Contracts, Employment and HR, Safeguarding oversight and policy reviews, Health & Safety policies. Diocesan and Deanery Synod reports. DCC reports, School Matters including the appointment of Foundation Governors.

Decisions taken and proposals voted on during the last year:

June 2023: Funding for an additional 6 hours per week to be provided for our Family Link Worker agreed.

Approval given to purchase a lockable bag to contain confidential safeguarding documents and health and safety records to be stored in the safe inside Studley Church during an interregnum.

October 23 – Annual report from Foundation Governors for Studley and MG schools submitted.

New Foundation Governor nominated to St. Mary's Academy, subject to references.

PCC accepted the Draft Budget for 2024. Fees and staff salaries were reviewed.

As part of Safeguarding Training, PCC members (and other church leaders) were made aware of the requirement to complete Domestic Abuse Awareness Training by the end of 2023.

Charlotte Fitchett was appointed as Parish Safeguarding Officer.

A PCC Code of Conduct was drafted from a discussion at the November Training evening and ultimately adopted for future meetings.

February 2024 – Following a change to the rules, approval of transition from Community to Foundation Governor of two governors at St. Mary's Academy was given.

After changes to the previous draft budget approval given of Final Budget forecast for 2024.

Prior Year Accounts presented by the Treasurer and approved.

In addition the Standing Committee have met in between to discuss urgent matters and draw up Agendas for PCC Meetings. PCC Forums (comprising Studley with Mappleborough PCC/DCC, representatives from the Spernal with Morton Bagot with Oldberrow PCC and other church members who wish to attend) have taken place and this past year have been in the form of Training evenings following the resources from CPAS and implementing recommendations from our Natural Church Development (Growing Healthy Churches) Survey. The minutes of all PCC meetings are available to church members and our PCC representatives are willing to discuss any non-confidential matters with church members.

Janet Green - Acting PCC Secretary

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

As I took over from Sue Johnson in late 2023, I can only really report back on what I have been doing Since becoming PSO.

In particular I have been attempting to work on our Parish Dashboards to ensure that our SG requirements are up to date and being carried out across the Parish. I can say that we are in the Green across both Parishes (MBG/ST and OB/MB)!

1. Safer recruitment

'The Church will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church'. The safeguarding handbook instructs that each volunteer appointment needs to have:

- Job description
- Application form

- Confidential declaration form
- Interview
- References x2
- Letter of appointment
- DBS check

Although this may seem onerous, templates are available for each of these stages. It is the Diocesan's SG policy that leaders in the church looking to make volunteer appointments to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults contact the PSO to discuss the safer recruitment requirements and that these are all completed **PRIOR TO THE INDIVIDUAL STARTING THEIR ROLE**. This not only safeguards vulnerable people but gives a clear direction to the volunteer about the job role and expectations.

As PSO I feel it is important to make efforts to ensure that this process is being followed accordingly at all times.

2. Renew lapsed DBS checks

DBS status needs to be reviewed every 3 years. As PSO I am to contact everyone within 3 months of their DBS expiring, to ensure sufficient time to get an updated DBS in place, so as not to cause any disruption to anyone's volunteer role.

3. Ensure training is up to date

Appropriate training needs to be reviewed every 3 years. Diocesan guidelines are clear as to what level of training is required for various roles within the church. As PSO I am also monitoring all the training records for all volunteers, and again aim to give 3 months notice to those who's training is due to expire.

4. Consider safeguarding issues in our social media

As social media continues to expand and grow in our church lives, it is vital that we are following accurate SG policies. Safeguarding guidance considers the use of social media and the potential for harm and misuse. Social Media includes sites such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok; the writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person; and taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards.

I can report that the PCC has complied with its duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

Notable updates:

As you are probably now aware, there is a significant update of the training requirements, such that anyone with a regular role on the Sunday service rota's, (who have not already completed this module) are now required to complete the BASIC safeguarding module every 3 years. I have emailed/written to all those who I am aware of who still need to complete this training. I am also holding a face to face session on 13th April for those who prefer this method. This is quite a big roll out, and will take time to complete for both Studley and Mappleborough (Oldberrow and Morton Bagot are all completed).

Finally, as always, just to reiterate the importance of good SG practice in helping to protect the most vulnerable of those in our communities. I am trying hard to meet more of those within the Churches and church affiliated activities, to become as familiar and approachable as possible to our wider church community.

Charlotte Fitchett - Parish Safeguarding Officer

FAMILY LINK WORKER'S REPORT

I am approaching 2 years in the role as Family Link Worker. Below is a snapshot of some of the key areas in which we have seen change / growth in the last year.

Sunday Services

Following adjustments to the service pattern / style in recent months and developing provision trialled in the first year, we have:

- A regular pattern for 2–10-year-olds children’s church across Mappleborough and Studley churches. Studley children’s church meets twice a month on first and third Sundays with between 2 and 6 children attending regularly. The children explore the current theme of the main church through age-appropriate worship, teaching, storytelling, and role play and prayer activities. The same resources are used at Mappleborough on a second Sunday with 2-3 children regularly attending.
- After a short hiatus, work has started on developing the Studley creche area into a ‘pray and play’ space to place the focus firmly on exploring the Bible and a relationship with Jesus. The intention is to move away from Bible crafts coupled with secular play to using story sacks and boxes each containing a simplified version of a key Bible story with a variety of activities to help young children engage with the story. Thank you to all those who have worked hard to fit out the extended children’s area with a new carpet and notice boards which have really added to the usability and appeal of the space.
- Some work has also started in the Millennium room to make this a more visually appealing and practical space when used by the young children and youth on a Sunday morning.
- An area for growth in both churches remains the number of families frequently and actively involved in the Sunday services. This is an area which would benefit from deeper prayer and consideration from the wider church community.
- I am also enjoying being involved in leading 4th Sunday Worship for Everyone as we explore ways to develop this service to appeal to the whole church family.

Youth

The youth group is now 2 years old and continues to meet monthly. The committed core of young people attending has reduced from 8/9 to 5/6, but current members have started inviting friends. This is headed up by Kay and Angela. We continue to work on increasing the discipleship nature of the group and are currently using Pete Greig’s Prayer Course. Many of the group continue to serve on a Sunday morning, helping with sound and PowerPoints, bellringing and on the reading rota. We are exploring a range of possibilities to develop our provision further, including discussing the possibility of joining with Alcester to provide a Youth Alpha. Unfortunately, Joe Bevan, who worked for Youth for Christ in Redditch, is no longer in post.

Sunbeams

Sunbeams continues to be a successful baby and toddler group after its relaunch in November 2022. The volunteer teams welcoming and making cakes continue to be invaluable in making the group a success, as have the leaders and helpers who come every week to set up / pack away, provide drinks / snacks, run craft tables. The format of the group is continuing to be popular, with free play, snack time (for adults and children) music/songs and story time. We have moved from entirely secular stories to including 2 Bible stories a half term which we explore through craft and interactive storytelling. Louise and I are attending the Greenhouse course which uses ‘Godsend’ materials to explore ways in which Sunbeams families can be moved on in a journey of faith. One possibility is developing the story and song section of Sunbeams using ideas and concepts from ‘Bubble Church’ – more information on this can be found here:

<https://www.bubblechurch.org/>

Mappleborough Green School

Links with Mappleborough School are slowly increasing and developing. I created an Easter prayer space in their library (which was subsequently available in Studley church over Holy Week) A variety of reflective activities enabled children to reflect on the events and their own emotions.

Linda and I are starting ‘Messy Church Goes Wild’ at the school. It will meet fortnightly straight after school, providing families with the opportunity to explore faith and spirituality through active outdoor and science activities. Our first session is on Weds 10th April. Please pray.

Baptisms

10 ‘Baptism Boxes’ containing a range of ideas to and resources to help families engage with faith have now been produced. Thank you to those who gave up their time to put these together and to those who are sponsoring families. More sponsors are needed please.

Baptism packs are available at all Baptisms to help children engage with the service and explore what baptism is both during the service and afterwards at home.

Links with Studley St Mary’s Junior School

Links between the school and church communities with teams of volunteers working in the school and the church building to help the children explore Easter, Harvest, the church building itself and the challenges of

transition from infants to juniors continuing this year. Year 6 Leaver's service in the summer of 2023 was a good opportunity to increase links between church, school, and home as all year 6 and their parents came to the church to celebrate year 6 children's successes over their time at Studley St. Mary's. Christmas was also a successful time for forging links between church, school, and home with a very successful Nativity performance by Year 3 to a packed audience of adults and supported by members of the congregation. Thank you to those who helped with parking, sound, serving refreshments and welcoming school families to the church. The whole school also came to the church for their Carol service in the last week of the autumn term.

My role in school has also developed over the course of this year. On a weekly basis I work with small groups and individual vulnerable children who are struggling emotionally. Lunchtime groups have reduced from 4 to 2, but 1 to 1 support has increased from 5 to 35 children over the course of 3 afternoons. For families I am working on providing a parenting course 'Parentalk' developed by Care for the Family the first of which will hopefully run in the second half of the summer term. More information on Parentalk can be found here:

<https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/courses/courses-for-parents/parentalk-courses/>

Angela Corlett - Family Link Worker

MESSY CHURCH

We continue to thrive at Messy Church, assisted by a committed team of volunteers, led by me.

We meet once a month, with additional events at Easter and Christmas.

Members of the congregation also assist with generous donations of food which we serve to everyone who comes. (we couldn't do without Linda Moffat's tuna sandwiches !).

Advertising is done through emails to families who have signed up, and through local social media pages – Studley Matters, Studley Chatters, Enjoyably Studley and the Arden Marches pages on Facebook and Instagram.

The activities and story telling vary every month, though we follow a basic plan – Welcome, song, story, message, activities, prayer and tea.

All the families who come regularly say how enjoyable they find it; the children all engage in the activities and the parents get to chat to church members and other like-minded parents.

We now promote other family friendly services that happen in the month, and one or two of our regulars have been to these services in church.

Thanks to all the team, without any of whom it would not be possible – Mary, Angela, Linda, Ruth, Jenny, Mercia, Bob, Caroline, Lynn, Ann, and our young helpers Keeley and Amy.

We have been joined this year by 2 young people who are using Messy Church as part of their Duke of Edinburgh awards (volunteering). Toby and Pippa will be very helpful.

Ann Bond

ANNA CHAPLAINCY

Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

Job 12:12

Over this year, a new pattern of the chaplaincy has developed with Wednesdays generally serving in the Arden Marches communities. Each week there are visits and services at one of the Care Homes. One week I was asked to take a service to celebrate the life of a resident who died over Christmas. All her family are in Australia so she had a Direct Funeral with no-one in attendance. Her friends and staff at the Care Home really appreciated being able to acknowledge her in prayer, song and bible verses; and to share stories and memories.

Care Home Services

Monthly visits to Studley Rose, Four Acres and Hayward Lodge have enabled friendships to grow with residents and staff. Sue, Ray and Teddy the dog regularly join me at the first two homes and Teddy, especially, is much appreciated! The stronger links between the church and the Care Homes has certainly led to meeting more of the spiritual needs of the elderly in these communities.

Unlike the other two homes, Hayward Lodge has not been keen to have services so my visits have involved chatting with residents and offering prayer to individuals at end-of-life.

Over Christmas, I led singing of Carols and Christmas songs at each of the homes and was joined by Mike Moffatt and others. Many of the staff joined in and appreciated the music.
I have also led monthly services at Sebright (Leamington Spa) where Josie Harris is a resident and a couple of services at Salford House (Salford Priors).

Dementia Cafe

The monthly Café is becoming well-established as a Studley event. Each month, a different activity is arranged and since the Café started in June, this has included music, craft and quizzes. Feedback from the growing number of visitors has been very positive and the evidence is that most of them have returned every month. Visitors have commented on the friendly welcome and the pleasant atmosphere and location. We continue to learn and improve the Café and welcome suggestions and comments.
Many thanks to all the volunteers for their time,.

Away Day

In December, Debbie Gurling (Birmingham Anna Chaplain) and I organised a retreat for Anna Chaplains in the Midlands which took place in Birmingham. It was a nourishing and uplifting experience and a valuable opportunity to offer support to each other.

I continue to meet with Rev Kate Mier monthly for supervision and prayer.

Celia Spiers

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

I think for me this last year has been approximately what one might call normal, whatever that is. Working my usual hours at the vicarage.

There was all the usual publicity via Facebook, website, and email. Producing weekly newsheets, notices, and posters for, amongst others, Christmas, Messy church and Easter, with input from Kate and others. There have also been service booklets to produce and PowerPoints to create. And also there have been the usual funeral, wedding and baptism enquiries to process.

This year there has been more work involving the HUBB, enabling church members to login on the website to access their rotas, use the church directory and members of the PCC and DCC's can access papers needed for their meetings.

Judith McLelland

ANKCORN HOUSE

Ankorn House building offers a meeting capacity of up to 40 people, depending on the room layout and catering facilities within the combined kitchen area.

- Historical data had been reviewed regarding the Title Deed for Ankorn House ownership. On 23 May 2022 the Jaffrey family solicitors were requested to confirm acceptance that Ankorn House had been conveyed to the Church. Unfortunately despite communication between our Incumbent and the solicitors; this matter is still unresolved almost a year later. Support from the Coventry Diocese Legal Secretary to progress this matter is now required to reach a conclusion.
- Following actively promoting the venue, Ankorn House has secured regular monthly paying users, from the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) and the West Warwickshire Pony Club. In addition regular Church Committees/Groups for administrative meetings plus Arden Marches courses such as Alpha and Forums use the facilities, but with no financial contribution towards the running costs from these bookings. Nominal annual rental fees are recouped from storage within Ankorn House from the local Parish Council and immediate neighbours.
- Although the last twelve months' rentals have improved financial income, the venue just about breaks even and continues to be subsidised by the General Church funds for its heating costs.

Linda Salisbury, Booking Coordinator

PARISH CENTRE

The Parish Centre has had another encouraging year under review and further consolidated its operating position with increased levels of hire since my last review in April 2023. Many of our long-standing regular user groups including Brownies, Sunbeams and Rainbows continue to meet regularly each week, and the current year general booking enquiries have shown a near full occupancy rate for family parties and community events during most weekends.

Our Souper Bowls gatherings restarted during the winter months and have continued into the spring of 2024. They have proved again to be a valuable additional warm hub venue for our local community, with fabulous choices of hot soup lunches on offer. Our Messy Church and Tea, Cake & Friendship Groups (previously known as Compassion Group) also continue to thrive on a regular weekly basis. We successfully launched our Dementia Café in June 2023, and this continues to meet every first Thursday afternoon of the month between 2pm & 4pm. All our volunteers are amazed every month by the huge challenges facing families having to care for loved ones with this lifechanging condition.

The upkeep of the building fabric of the Centre continues to be never ending! Our new heating system installed in March 2023, has generally performed well considering the wild variations of weather encountered over the winter. We have now added a Wi-Fi facility to our existing Bluetooth system which has been very well received by our varied cross section of visitors. We are currently exploring the replacement of new front windows at the hall in UPVC in keeping with the other existing hall windows.

My thanks again go to Phil Pattison, for his continued support and encouragement, and to Mike Bond for his regular watch over our lighting and heating systems, always a challenge in aging buildings! To Rob and Catherine, our cleaners and 'caretakers' and to Ian Nichol, our gardener, who looks after our gardens, including the car park. A special mention to Studley in Bloom who not only continued to improve the Parish Centre grounds and building with their maintenance of several planters, but also blessed the community with a donation of a new garden bench, located on the approach lawn to the hall, to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III.

Finally, can I encourage anyone reading this report who would like to join a small team at the Parish Centre to help from time to time with opening and locking up the hall, to contact me? This would certainly help operations particularly during busy holiday times. I would also encourage you to visit our website at www.ardenmarches.co.uk and scroll to Our locations/Parish Church Centre. This provides a pictorial and factual outline of the facilities we have on offer at the Parish Centre.

Mike Moffat

STUDLEY CHURCHYARD

Despite the weather the churchyard team has turned out on the first Saturday of each month, except December when we were rained off. During the winter months we concentrate on clearing some of the long growth left from the die back in the autumn and in the summer months we try to maintain areas for outdoor activities such as teas, messy church and places where people can meet and chat and other areas where wild flowers can grow. Unfortunately due to the size of the churchyard and the number in the team we still have to leave one area uncleared.

We do have quite a variety of flowers starting with snowdrops early in the year, then daffodils, primroses, cowslips, garlic, and blue bells in the spring. Later we have an abundance of white hogweed with smaller flowers in the grass beneath them including the yellow rattle which we hope will spread and suppress the grass thus allowing more flowers to prosper. The year ends with a good display of autumn cyclamen. Holly berries are collected early (but plenty left for the birds) and used to decorate the church at Christmas.

There are now 4 compost heaps, hopefully producing our own compost for the garden of remembrance. Sticks have been made into a wall as a wildlife habitat and a bug hotel was made and sited during a messy church session.

We have a very dedicated team who turn up regularly for which I am very grateful. Not all of the team come to church but we enjoy working, talking and drinking coffee together. Many of us are over 75 and we do need more volunteers, especially in the summer months.

Hilary Volrath

BELLRINGERS

The bells have been rung for most of the Sunday services and 1 wedding.

This year we welcomed two new recruits, Joanne and Hilary who are making good progress and will soon be of a standard to join us on a Sunday morning.

On Saturday 6th May, the Nation celebrated the Coronation of King Charles 3rd. A variety of ringing was performed to mark the occasion-

On the morning of the coronation, the tower was open for general ringing for all 16 Studley bellringers. The general ringing included the changes of Kings and Queens. Call changes on 8 were also rung by a band of under 23's and four members of the Corlett family had the opportunity to ring together.

On Sunday 7th May two quarter peals of Plain Bob Doubles were rung one by the under 23's band.

On Thursday 18th May we rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples.

On Sunday 18th June we rang a quarter Peal of Grandsire Doubles, 1260 changes, for King Charles 3rd first official birthday.

On Saturday 2nd September, Studley hosted the Worcestershire and District Change Ringing Association Southern branch striking competition.

The light party in October and the Snowdrop tea were two opportunities to open the tower up for taster sessions for potential newcomers. At the light party a rope was dropped down into the Millenium room where the children could chime the bell. At the snow drop tea several visitors had a go at ringing the bell full circle.

In December, we were once again invited to join the Inkberrow ringing outing, ringing at various towers in the Vale of Evesham with a pub lunch at the Fleece in Bretforton.

On Saturday 24th February, Richard and I attended the Association of Ringing Teachers Course – module 2C at Lighthorne, Warwick. This module concentrated on skills for new and experienced teachers on how to support and develop those being trained in the necessary foundation skills for good ringing and then move them on to ringing changes. We have put into practice some of the learning and activities from the day and many of our young ringers have been enrolled on the Learning the Ropes course.

A big thankyou to Chris and Lizzy Tennant for their support to Sunday service ringing at Studley over many years. They have now made St Stephens Redditch their home church and we wish them well.

On Tuesday 16th April, the Studley Beavers are coming to visit the church and hopefully will enjoy going up the tower to see the bells and chime them.

Thank you to all who dedicate their time learning this skill to keep the bells ringing out in Studley.

Louise Grubb - Tower Captain

MAPPLEBOROUGH GREEN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Summer Term 2023

With King Charles II Coronation taking place at the beginning of May, there was plenty of excitement around the school. Angela Corlett, started her second year as Family Link Worker for Arden Marches, and intended to become more involved with families attending Mappleborough Green Primary School, as a church-linked school.

NAEC Stoneleigh hosted a county wide event "ALIVE! 2023" on behalf of Coventry Diocesan Board of Education on 15/16 June, which MGPS took part in. The event was attended by over 8,000 children. Due to lack of availability of church volunteers and her free time, unfortunately Linda Salsbury was unable to build on the success of developing the Lighting the Candle Group from last term. However the school continued with their own Faith Alive group leading prayers and worship on a regular basis, alongside the weekly Collective Worship led by Revd Kate Mier and Angela Corlett.

The church members were involved with the School Fete on 30 June, and Diane Pannell and Linda Salsbury assisted with serving refreshments. Jennie and Alan Jarmy started to take a break from supporting the school, following announcing they would be moving away from the area, once their house was sold.

To conclude the Summer term, there was a Year 6 Leavers Service in Church on Friday 21 July, where traditionally the book 'It's your Move' Secondary School Survival Guide paperback by Scripture Union was presented to the 18 children leaving primary school.

Autumn Term 2023

On 7 September the parents of the new Reception children were invited to a 'welcome breakfast' and invited to attend the Café Service on Sunday, 17 September. It was the first time same-sex parents had attended and were welcomed with their son. Revd Kate Mier advised that the school had reported at the Full Governors' Meeting on 11 September outstanding academic results, exceeding the national average results, giving credit for the hard work put in by the teaching staff with the pupils. The Harvest Service led by the school Faith Alive group was in church on 28 September 2023, which was supported by the whole school, along with some family members. The school generously donated to Arden Marches Foodbank as part of this worship.

Linda Salisbury whilst continuing as Foundation Governor, was appointed a staff member at the school in October to work as Breakfast Club Assistant. This was seen as a positive outcome, and would further link the church with families from the school. A Greenhouse Church of England initiative, supported by Coventry Diocese was launched on 4 November 2023, by the Alcester Rural Hub team. MGPS children and their families would be considered as part of this to grow and encourage new worshipping communities from within the school. It was anticipated that an outdoor Messy Church Adventure concept would be developed in the new year.

The school Carol Service in church was scheduled for Thursday, 21 December at 2pm, but due to the coach transporting the Faith Alive group and Reception/Year 1 children to the church having its windscreen damaged and side window smashed from a falling tree, the event was cancelled that day. The school was able to complete its Carol Service as planned in school the following day. The church's Christingle Service on Christmas Eve was well supported by local families, some of which had attended from the school.

Spring Term 2024

The new Spring term highlighted a slight reduction in pupils, with children moving away from the school at the end of the Autumn term due to the two-tier structure promoted at Worcestershire schools. Currently 113 students have placements, 64% male and 36% female.

The school dynamics have also developed with regard to ethnicity, as there are 110 White British children (96%), 4 Black/Indian British children (3.6%), 1 Lithuanian child (0.9%) 1 Polish child (0.9%) and 1 Romanian child (0.9%) in the school.

Alex Finch, Headteacher continues to work hard with staff and volunteers and offers incentives to the children to engage with literacy, having upgraded the library shelves and obtained newer reading books chosen by the children from Class 4. During February parents were invited into the school to attend 'workshops' and read to their children. Reading and writing is a key curriculum focus of work for all classes. The Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspections framework changed in September 2023. Updating the theology that underpins the work shaped by the Christian faith and brings it into more focus for present-day policies and practices. SIAMS inspection plays an important role in the improvement of Church schools and is taken very seriously by the school Headteacher and RE Lead, Wendy Linnett.

The school Easter Service in church was held on Thursday, 22 March 2024 where the whole school attended, along with friends and family from 1.30pm

An initiative identified by Angela and Linda to involve the school families with after school Messy Church Outdoor Adventures inaugural session, will take place on Wednesday, 10 April 2024 3.15 – 5pm, and be held twice a month term time only. The sessions will be available free for children from MGPS and their siblings, accompanied by an adult.

Community volunteers and Foundation Governors continue to be actively sought to support the Christian faith within Mappleborough Green Primary School,

Linda Salisbury

STUDLEY ST MARY'S CE ACADEMY

This has been another exceptionally busy year for the school, following on from some rather unsettled and difficult times, but one which certainly has proven to be a turning point towards more stable and really positive times ahead. A number of staff changes during the academic year 2022-23, amongst which were the appointments of a deputy head and SENDCO, meant that the school started the new academic year fully staffed, albeit with a relatively newly formed team.

The long awaited 'highlight' of the autumn term was undoubtedly the arrival of Ofsted in mid-September where the team of two inspectors carried out a thorough inspection of all aspects of school life over two days. The final report acknowledges the hard work and the improvements that have taken place since the last two inspections in 2017 and 2019, placing the school in a strong position to move forward, and staff, parents and governors alike were delighted to see this recognised in the school's overall effectiveness classification of 'Good'. This classification was awarded across the board in all four areas inspected: Quality of education; Behaviour and attitudes; Personal development; and Leadership and management. This report serves as a just endorsement of the sheer hard work, determination and vision of all the staff at Studley St Mary's, and in particular of the headteacher who has striven tirelessly to build a strong team to work together in 'the Studley way' for the benefit of the children. The full report may be accessed here: [Ofsted Reports | Studley St Mary's CofE Academy \(covmat.org\)](https://covmat.org/Ofsted-Reports-Studley-St-Marys-CofE-Academy)

During the spring term 2024, at the request of the Diocese of Coventry Multi Academy Trust (MAT), the headteacher has been providing support to Salford Priors CE Academy on a part-time basis whilst a new headteacher is recruited and settles in there. Following on from the strong Ofsted report, this serves as a further affirmation by the MAT of Studley's robust position. It is clearly an exciting opportunity for all staff to share some of the fantastic practices that have been developed in school.

The children themselves have been involved in all sorts of community and church events over the year. Braving the rain, they stoically took part in the Remembrance parade in November and sang beautifully and confidently to the village crowds at the Studley Christmas Lights Switch On. Children and parents have also visited the church on numerous occasions, for example the Year 3 Nativity and the whole school carol service. Collective worship in school remains steadfast and in the school's September training day, time was spent exploring and deepening staff's understanding of the MAT's vision of 'Life in all its fullness' (based on John 10:10).

Perhaps one of the most exciting events of the year for the children has been the arrival of the school's therapy dog! This has come about as part of the commitment to support the well-being of pupils at the school. Golden retriever puppy, Joy, arrived in February to everyone's delight, with the purpose of bringing comfort and alleviating stress. The school is holding fundraising events to cover Joy's upkeep and training and it is hoped and anticipated that she will offer a reassuring presence and have a positive impact on the children and their education.

The governing body has also seen some changes over the year with both Keith Johnson and Sarah Furlow standing down from their positions. May I take this opportunity to express sincere thanks to them for their unstinting and invaluable support for Studley St Mary's over the past years. A new foundation governor and a parent governor have joined the governing body, alongside a new school governance professional from the MAT.

Shirley Stout

TEA, CAKE AND FRIENDSHIP FORMALLY KNOWN AS COMPASSION

We have new members and also new helpers which is very good because it means that we have enough helpers to cover if someone can't make their rota'd slot. The members greatly enjoy the meetings and many friendships have resulted from it.

Joan Lock

THE FRIENDSHIP GROUP

After our Winter break, everyone looks forward to starting our monthly lunch outings again.

Our first outing this year was on 31st March 2023 to The Bell , Astwood Bank, where 30 members met up for a lovely hot meal.

Most of the venues after May have been close to home this year, due to Eric's ill health.

Once again the Christmas meal was at The Kings Court Hotel on 8th December, as they all enjoy the Christmas meals there. The afternoon was enjoyed by 38 members.

Celia very kindly offered to play Christmas songs and carols for us this year, along with Julie playing her flute. Giving John Parker a break. We had a few jokes from Jan Parker as well.

I also organised a raffle again, which raised £80.00. This was shared between The Dementia Cafe, in memory of Valerie Greathead and Cancer Research in memory of Eric Lee.

During this year we have had 7 members who have sadly passed away, But we will always remember the happy times we all shared together, with fondness & love.

It has been a difficult year due to Eric's passing in September, but being able to arrange the outings each month and meeting up with everyone, has helped me through, I received such a lot of love and support from everyone.

Once again I would like to thank all of my volunteer drivers, as without them, this mission of outreach would not be possible.

I look forward to our next year together.

God Bless

Margaret Lee

2ND STUDLEY (ST. MARY'S) RAINBOWS AND BROWNIES

2023/24 has been another busy action packed year.

Both Brownies and Rainbows run over subscribed units once a week during term time. Currently Brownies have 26 girls, Rainbows 32.

Brownies:

This year they have supported a fabulous homeless charity, providing 35 shoe boxes full of essential items.

Took a trip to the theatre to watch the pantomime at The Palace Theatre in Redditch.

Had a sleepover based around Disney.

Studley in bloom visited and Brownies helped with planting

Rainbows:

Raised money for a local animal shelter through a Bear and Book Sale.

Visited 4 Acres Care home, in the spring to plant in their raised beds and pots and in the autumn to run some crafts and cake decorating activities, which is always well received by the residents. We try to visit them twice a year.

A county day out was organised at Compton Verney which we attended - exploring the grounds, den building and fire lighting Rainbows had an evening at the theatre to watch a local theatre company (Harlequins) perform chitty chitty bang Bang and a cinema visit to see Matilda.

Rainbows use the church once a term for their "Promise Night" This is where our newest Rainbows make their promise and parents come along to watch. We are very appreciative of this facility which makes for a very special evening which is always well attended by our parents.

Girlguiding Studley:

We had a fab evening at the entaco, playing games and eating a traditional afternoon tea to celebrate the Kings Coronation. With over 100 girls and leaders in attendance.

More recently we had our annual Thinking day event held at the Entaco attended again by around 100 girls and leaders (Rainbows, Brownies and Guides) Our theme was the "Girlguide World Centres" where we explored the diverse cultures from our 5 world centres over an afternoon.

There is a guide unit in Studley that meets at the Methodist church, but we no longer have a church aided guide unit (10-14yr olds) as there were no leaders to take over when it closed. It is a real shame as we lose a lot of girls because of this. We do worry going forward that this unit will also be lost if new leaders aren't found as the two current leaders would like to take a step back.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the church for being so accommodating to our needs at the Parish Centre and when we want to commandeer the church itself.

Pamela Winfield - leader in charge of Rainbows and District Commissioner

ARDEN FOODBANK

The Arden Foodbank opened in April 2013, as part of the Trussell Trust Foodbank network and serves Alcester, Studley and the surrounding area.

Care professionals, such as health visitors, schools, citizens advice and social workers, as well as local church ministers and others, identify people in crisis and issue them with vouchers. We then redeem the voucher for three days' nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food.

When we opened our doors, eleven years ago, the hope was that in a couple of years the need would no longer be there. However, as the figures show, we are needed more than ever. Demand on our foodbank has nearly doubled in the past year, due in part, to the energy crisis.

This year, (last year in brackets), we fulfilled 821 (440) vouchers

We fed 1213 (592) adults & 643 (338) children, giving out over 13,000kg of food

For the third year running, at Christmas, we distributed over 214 food parcels to families, identified by the local schools in our area as being in need.

We continue to receive generous donations from companies, organisations and individuals who have supported us with food or money during the last year, without these donations we could not continue to operate and help local people in our community.

Many thanks to all those in our church families who continue to support the foodbank in any way, by giving food, money or time. Without your help we could not continue.

Hilary Volrath

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN STUDLEY

Representatives from the Studley churches continue to meet about 4 times a year to plan what they can do together and inform each other of what is happening in their own churches, always with an invitation that anyone can join in. Unfortunately due to lack of numbers and leaders in some of the other churches some of the meetings have only been attended by members from the Methodist and Anglican congregations. The main joint activities have been around the week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, Easter, Christian Aid week, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas. Joint 'special' services are never well attended so other than Ash Wednesday we have concentrated on more what we do together. On Good Friday once again we had a walk of witness with the focus on praying round the village and not going inside each church. Envelopes were delivered to each house for Christian Aid week. The churches again organised the service at the war memorial for Remembrance Sunday though the sound system was still not good enough for most people to hear. At the Studley Christmas Lights switch on the churches together sang carols outdoors in Millennium square in the afternoon and then in the evening inside the village hall after the lights had been switched on. Christmas cards were delivered again to every house in Studley and Mappleborough giving details of the Christmas services of all the churches. A small group sang carols in the care homes.

Please pray for all the churches in Studley that we all may prosper, work and worship together as much as possible and draw closer in our strivings to bring Christ's light and love to this community.

Hilary Volrath

DEANERY SYNOD 2023-24

Studley with Mappleborough Green Parish is one of twenty three parishes in the Alcester Deanery. The Deanery Synod is an important part of the governance of the Church of England, and shares the mission of the Church in local areas. They are places for sharing good practice between the Parishes of a Deanery, and act as a communication line between the Diocesan Synod and the Parishes. It is really important that Parishes are well represented at Deanery Synod, and would strongly encourage people to stand for election.

The number of deanery synod representatives that our parish can elect is based on our electoral roll numbers:

Studley	2 Deanery Synod Representatives
Mappleborough Green	2 Deanery Synod Representatives

Currently Studley has 1 vacancy and Mappleborough Green has 1 vacancy.

Once elected, Deanery Synod representatives are ex officio members of our Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The Deanery Synod is regulated by the 1969 Synodical Government Measure which sets out five functions:

- to consider matters concerning the Church of England and other matters of religious or public interest;
- to bring together the views of the parishes of the Deaneries, to discuss and formulate common policies, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes, and generally to promote in the Deaneries the whole mission of the Church;
- to make known and put into effect any provision made by the Diocesan Synod;
- to consider the business of the Diocesan Synod and to sound parochial opinion;
- to raise matters with the Diocesan Synod.

Alcester Deanery Synod met on 20 July and 17 October in 2023 and on 8 February 2024. At each of these events Speakers from Coventry Diocese were invited to attend and share their experiences and knowledge of their faith and spiritual journeys:

Revd. Daniel Corlett, Associate Minister Alcester Rural Mission Hub: Looked at what were the priorities for the rural church? Discussion around what the priorities for the Rural Mission Hub were, how we can work together and why we should have had. Daniel stated that for many years we have had a single model of church across our deanery – essentially a mono-culture Church, and the Diocese was now considering a variety of models of ‘church’ offering a mixed ecology – workplace gathering, schools, home groups and micro churches, were all being looked at. Individual parishes were advised that the Alcester Rural Mission Hub could provide support via case studies, workshops/facilitation and start-up coaching for new initiatives.

Revd. Rob Harrison, Director of Ministry and Leadership introduced the background and the current training available for the different Pathways on offer through Coventry Diocese for congregational members regarding:

- Bereavement
- Children/Youth/Family
- Community
- Evangelism
- Leading Worship

Each pathway could be joined at any time. People were advised they could undertake specific aspects without completing the full training pathway, potentially dipping in and out as the courses were of interest throughout the year.

Mrs Nicola Perryman a member of the Coventry Diocese Environment Group, outlined environmental issues and what was involved, and where help and support could be obtained from for the Deanery’s Eco Church journey, along with **Colin Angus**, Coventry Diocese Net Zero Carbon Project Officer outlined Coventry Diocese offered resources for access to grants and advice for churches identified in a paper written by Colin, *Pathway to Net Zero*.

All of these speakers offered valuable advice and support to Parish Deanery Representatives, and an opportunity to share the information with their church communities, to support developing faith within our churches.

In addition to these varied speakers, the Deanery Synod Representatives receive reports from the **Coventry Diocesan Synod** and **Deanery Leadership Team** on initiatives and proposals for the Parishes within the Alcester Deanery. **Deanery funds and general accounts** are reviewed quarterly, of which appropriate

amounts of money are identified as Parish Shares; for the parishes to contribute to pay for mission and ministry, specifically for clergy stipends (living costs) and their housing.

Whilst some discussions may seem quite challenging and focussed on issues outside of one's own Parish, the experience of being a Deanery Synod representative has been rewarding by appreciating that we are not alone, and other parish churches within the Deanery are feeling the same as ourselves. The Deanery Synod members can share and support one another as part of these meetings, and also outside as part of their normal church duties.

The Alcester Deanery Leadership Team are seeing the vacancy of four clergy posts within the Deanery as a Kairos moment! An opportunity to look at ourselves, and open up new opportunities for sharing across parish boundaries.

Linda Salisbury