



St Mark's Church
LEAMINGTON SPA

The Life of St Mark's

Reports from the groups and activities at St Mark's Church
Annual Parochial Church Meeting May 2024



This is a collection of reports about the activities that have taken place over the last year from the many groups that make up the body of St Mark's. It is in addition to the 'Annual Report and Financial Statements of the PCC', the official report from the Parochial Church Council, Churchwardens and Vicar.

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INTRODUCTION – Rev Tim Broadbent

Thanks for taking the time to look at this document. What you are looking at is more than a collection of words; it's the story of St Mark's trying to live out the gospel. We recently worked out that during a typical term time week over 700 people pass through the double doors of our community centre. It's clear that we are at the heart of Milverton, and we hope that the centre of our heart is a welcome in Jesus' name. I firmly believe that what follows a warm welcome is a sense of belonging. This Belonging is our first value and central to our vision. Through a sense of belonging, people discover the faith to believe, then God empowers them to become who God is calling them to be.

There is much to celebrate in this story of St Mark's and gospel. Most of this work was planned and completed before my arrival, so I can take no credit. I can only applaud the hard work and dedication it takes to carry out all these activities, and I look forward to experiencing the next chapter of St Mark's living out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORK – Ros Davies

Sunday Groups:

- April Harris runs our Explorers group, I run our Climbers group, and we work alongside a dedicated team of volunteers. We continue to use the Roots material. The number of children who regularly attend is growing.
- The format of the groups is – Welcome, share snacks and news about our week, pray about all we have shared, followed by The Lord's Prayer. We share church news the children may be interested in. We then look at a Bible story and do some crafts. We play a game if we have time.
- April and the Explorers also arrange fundraising events during the year.

All Age Services:

Tim and I plan these together. Our children and young people have grown in confidence: writing and reading prayers and reading the Bible passage.

Baptisms and Thanksgiving services:

I visit families who enquire about these services and coordinate with all involved. In the future, this will be something Tim and I will do together.

Outreach

Toddler groups:

- Our Toddler groups run on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Tim joins us on Wednesdays; he tells stories and plays his guitar for song time.
- We are seeing many of the parents who attend these groups coming to church services over the year. Some of them really enjoyed the nativity service, saying it felt “welcoming and inclusive.”
- These families are also invited to join us on Good Friday for Easter crafts.

Summer Fun:

This outdoor play for families activity ran through August and was again extremely successful. Nikki Hill led this along with her team of volunteers.

Christingle:

Many families attend our Christingle service, most of whom I have worked with at various times over the years. It’s always really great to see the children and young people; some I have known since reception are now at secondary school.

Schools work

Milverton and Brookhurst:

- Our school work continues to be a hugely positive part of my work at St Mark’s and is probably the most unseen!
- I mentor 15 children who, for various reasons, may need support and encouragement.
- I also organise playground activities with the help of the children I work with.

- We see hundreds of children, parent helpers, and teaching staff who come along to church each year for events that I plan at Christmas, Easter and Harvest and for their own planned events – such as harvest festival services where each school brings all year groups along with parent helpers and teaching staff. Typically, around 750 children and 300 hundred parents and teaching staff. The same numbers come to St Mark’s for Christmas concerts and their nativity services.
- Tim is with us for these events and it’s an excellent way for all who visit to get to know him.

Emscote House Nursery:

Emscote House Nursery holds its graduation each year at St Mark’s, typically bringing around 30 children, together with about 200 grandparents and staff.

Caterpillar Nursery:

Caterpillar Nursery had previously come to church for various things over the years, although we hadn’t seen them since Covid! They have recently been in touch and will be visiting at Easter.

Thanks:

Huge thanks to all I work alongside and those who help in whatever capacity. You are super brilliant – without you, the children’s work would not have happened. I am immensely grateful to each and every one of you.

‘You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it.’ 1 Corinthians: 27

- If you would like to know more about anything I do, please let me know.
- If you would like to be part of the children’s work team, please do have a chat with me or Tim.
- Please pray for our children’s work and for our wonderful team.

The St Mark's Children's and Families work aims to:

- 1:** Encourage the growing and strengthening of faith throughout childhood.
- 2:** Support children and their whole families in matters of life and faith.
- 3:** Continue developing a loving, nurturing church community that welcomes children.

YOUTH GROUP – Sandy Smith

St Mark's Youth Group meets for fun, food, and fellowship in the Upper Room, 7 – 8.30 pm, every Wednesday during term time.

- Years 8 and above.
- We enjoy snacks, games, crafts, silliness, Big Chats and a little bit of Christianity relevant to our young people navigating school, church, family and the world.
- Throw in water balloon mayhem, trips, ice skating, movie nights and sleepovers.

Sounds awesome, eh? Come and hang out. 😊

SMALL GROUPS – Amanda di Giovanni

Small Groups have an important role in fulfilling our new vision statement from 2022: "Belonging... Believing... Becoming..."

A community of believers, sharing God's love with the world."

- We have 7 groups with a total of 55 members. Most meet weekly on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday evening.
- The groups use a variety of resources. Some follow the sermons and use questions set by the preacher; others are more adventurous and find resources to meet the group's needs.
- Small groups provided a space to chat, read and discuss God's word and how to apply it to our lives, and pray for one another.
- It builds on our Sunday or Thursday worship as "we seek to encourage belonging and nurture believing, together becoming followers of Jesus who share God's love with the world."
- Thank you to all the leaders, co-leaders, facilitators and hosts for your commitment over the year.

If you would like to join a small group, please let me know; we operate a “try before you buy” policy – if you don’t think the group is right for you, please feel free to try another one.

CHAPLAINCY AT ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA COLLEGE

– Marie Calvert

Our work at Leamington College is growing steadily, and we have been really encouraged this year by how people respond to us.

- We have started prayer meetings for staff – this is currently very small but is expanding slowly, and those who have come are very encouraged about what we are offering and to discover other staff who are Christians. We are delighted to be offering this and hope to offer prayer meetings for students in due course.
- Some great conversations with students – including one young man who had been struggling with thoughts of serious self-harm. There are many with mental health needs, and it is good to be able to offer kindness, prayers and sweets to all we meet.
- A female student asked me how our church deals with people from the LGBTQ+ community – and was genuinely delighted and surprised when I told her about St. Mark’s. I feel so glad to belong to a church like ours.
- Many students now approach us before we’ve approached them and often choose to take a written blessing rather than a sweet.
- We sang carols again at Christmas – and we attracted lots of attention, especially from some special needs students who loved joining in. One of them regularly greets me now, ‘Oh, you’re the prayer lady who sang carols with us at Christmas, aren’t you? That was great.’

We are a small team of 5 (Pam Griffin Booth, Rani Clare, Bev and Ray Kirton), and I’m so grateful to each one for their dedication and enthusiasm. We would also be happy to have a few more. We have a rota and go in on a Monday lunchtime. If you’d like to explore getting involved, come and have a word.

MISSION REPORT– Amanda di Giovanni

One definition of mission is to join in with what God is doing in the world. In that respect we are all involved in mission. Some people are involved full-time, in paid or voluntary roles, through prayer and financial support.

- St Mark's is committed to giving a tithe (10%) of our income to individuals and organisations working in various areas of mission.
- Last year, this comprised around £17,200; details can be found in the Missionary and Charitable Giving section on page 18 of the 2023 accounts.
- Several people from St Mark's are involved with local mission groups such as CAP, Street Pastors and Flourish.

ECO CHURCH – Lisa Fletcher

St Mark's Eco Team are on track to receive the Silver Eco Church award this year. To achieve this, these are some of the activities that have taken place:

- We ran a successful and well-attended Eco Fair in June 2023. Something we will be doing again this June.
- We worked with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to sow wildflower seeds around the perimeter of the lawn at the front of the church and to plant a hedgerow in the area to the rear of the church hall.
- We continue to provide information and actions for people to consider in reducing their impact on climate change, for example, using carbon footprint calculators.
- Ethical chocolate advent calendars and Easter eggs have been sold in church.
- We are planning to continue developing St Mark's gardens for nature and the community.

We meet roughly once per term to review our progress on the Eco Church scheme discuss ideas and agree actions. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch with the church office or look out for details in the notices about when we will next be meeting and come along. You could also speak to Sophie Harper or Lisa Fletcher if you have any ideas you would like to share.



CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP) – **Beryl Chisholm**



As Cap Money Local Co-ordinator, I am responsible for organising these courses. It's a two-week course, with each session lasting two and a half hours, aiming to help people to manage their finances better, live within a budget, clear debts and save for the future.

- In 2023, we were able to run five courses. Three courses were at the DWP, Brandon House Leamington, one at The Brunswick Hub and one at The Westbury Centre.
- It is always a challenge to find people who want to do the course. However, we are happy to run the course for just one person. Jesus did things for one individual and we believe God sends us the people who need to do the course. We were also able to visit three people in their own homes. So, in 2023 twelve people learnt new skills to manage their money.
- In the Autumn, the CAP Money Course changed to CAP Money Coaching, and we all had to have training on brand new material. It's been a challenge to work out how to present the new material but we have done it twice now and think it works.
- We now have six Money Coaches – four are members of St Marks; one from Myton Church and one from Saltisford Church. If you believe God is calling you to join us as a CAP Money Coach, speak to me. You don't need to be a financial expert, you just have to know that God is calling you to this ministry. The training is currently online and at various venues around the UK.

As I said earlier, it's a challenge to find people who want to learn the skills to get in control of their finances, yet we know so many people are struggling with their money. If you can help us get a small group of people together (maximum 6) we can run a course so please get in touch. 267 people have now attended 82 courses that we've run over the last 13 years.

CLEANING – Nikki Hill

We aim to keep the church building clean and tidy ourselves. Amazing what you discover about the church building while dusting, polishing, hoovering, climbing ladders and tripping electrics!

- Most groups and individuals clean up after themselves.
- Two people polish our brasses regularly, although one wishes to retire, and one energetic gentleman keeps our eagle gleaming.
- One person hoovers the carpets each week and cleans the toilets. An extra person would be helpful in making it a bi-weekly activity.
- Occasional Saturday morning Spring Cleans are held; normally before special church calendar events like Easter, Harvest and Christmas. All are welcome with tea and nice biscuits served.
- Some people keep a specific area clean and tidy.

We are so grateful to all who help to keep our building tidy and clean – you are very much appreciated. In particular Sany and Eliza, who cleaned the hall complex while we were in-between regular cleaners. If there's an area you'd like to cherish, maybe something you'd like to see cleaned better – please let me know.

HALL KITCHEN – Nikki Hill

Available for our church groups or events and for hire. Well used this past year.

- Passed the environmental health inspection with another 5 stars.
- FIRs continues to use it every month, and toddlers use it weekly in term time.
- Various church meals served and 'getting to know you' chats around the dishwasher. Church groups use as required.
- New freezer. Fridge fixed. Updated pots, pans and casserole dishes.
- The Food Hygiene course, run by Amanda di Giovanni, was well attended.

Thank you to all who help to keep this area hygienic.

FIRS LUNCH – Sidney Syson and Beryl Chisholm

Numbers have been a bit low this year, only in the high 20's, so please do let retired people know that we offer a really good lunch at 1 pm on the second Tuesday of the month for £5, with the opportunity to socialise.

- FIRS is open to all. In 2023 we didn't miss a month, as we lunched in August as well.
- This is only possible thanks to our wonderful cooks Katy Fermor, Nikki Hill, Jackie Sanders, and Jane Wigman, who were ably assisted by Jane Knifton and Margaret Jakiel. Nikki and Jane Wigman have now retired, but we are so grateful to them both for all they have cooked for us. Jane has said she will still cook her famous puddings, though! Even more of a loss will be Jane and Margaret, whose last lunch this year was in March. Our enormous thanks to them as they have faithfully helped our cooks month by month for years and years, masterminding the washing up and clearing away at the end, usually enabling the chefs to go by 3pm, which is some achievement. Those that lunch leave much earlier after their coffee!
- FIRS is a real team effort headed by Beryl Chisholm, with Andrew Cooper supplying quizzes, and Sidney doing the cooks' rota. Then there are the table layers and servers and clearer uppers: the Tarrants, The Thomases, The Hambletons and The Sanders. Thank you to you all, including Pam Griffin-Booth who has joined us, and Claudette, who will join the cooks in September.

GARDENING – Amanda di Giovanni

The church has extensive grounds that we try to keep tidy and attractive to local wildlife.

- Volunteers do all garden maintenance – thank you.
- Some people look after a particular area, others come to our gardening mornings.
- We have a land management plan, which includes mowing grass and leaving some areas to grow, planting wildflower seed in the front garden and a new blackthorn hedge behind the hall.

- The lawn at the front includes several different types of grass and at least 14 other plants – have a look next time you are there.
 - The crocuses we planted in the lawn last autumn have grown.
- Please get in touch if you would like to know more – or have ideas.

RAINBOWS – Julie Brown

St Marks Rainbows have had an exceptional year.

- The Rainbow Unit has attended Midland County Days, enjoyed Camel riding, uniting with Trefoil Guild and spending time with the elderly.
- The Unit raised over £1,600 for Molly Ollys Wishes (a charity which supports children with life-threatening illnesses and their families to help with their emotional wellbeing) by sleeping over at the Museum in Warwick. A representative of Molly Ollys came to speak at a St Mark’s Service.
- As a Unit Leader at St Mark’s Rainbows I represented Girlguiding Warwickshire at Leamington Pride leading a stall with a small group of Guiders from Warwickshire.
- Rainbows and Young leaders have worked towards awards and achievements within the program; girls have achieved Gold, Silver and Bronze awards, Warwickshire Lions awards and Duke of Edinburgh awards.

“From Christ the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4: 16



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 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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