



**St Mark's Church**  
LEAMINGTON SPA

## **The Life of St Mark's Church**

Reports from the groups and activities at St Mark's Church  
Annual Parochial Church Meeting, May 2025



Harvest Collection for Foodbank 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.

**Registered Charity Number 1128485**

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## **INTRODUCTION – Rev Tim Broadbent**

**Thank you for your interest in the life of St Mark's. What you are about to read tells a story far bigger than words.**

- At the heart of our faith is the belief that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). Words alone don't change lives - lived-out faith does. This document isn't just a collection of sentences; it's a reflection of how St Mark's is bearing witness to the gospel, not just within our walls but in the wider community where faith meets everyday life.
- St Mark's is more than a building; it is a community where people find belonging, discover faith, and are shaped into who God calls them to be. Each week, over 700 people walk through our doors - but the heart of our church is not just who gathers here, but how we are sent out. Whether through acts of service, conversations of hope, or quiet faithfulness in workplaces, schools, and homes, St Mark's is alive in the world, carrying Christ's love beyond Sunday and beyond our building.
- This is a story of belonging, believing, and becoming - one shaped by those who came before us and one that continues to unfold. I stand in gratitude for the dedication that has shaped St Mark's into what it is today, and I look forward to what comes next. I have said before, and will say again, the greatest days of St Mark's are yet to come. These days will happen as we continue to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORK – Ros Davies**

### **Sunday Groups**

- Our Explorers group, led by April Harris, and our Climbers group, led by me, continue to grow with the support of our dedicated team of volunteers. We use the *Roots* material for our sessions.

- The format of our groups includes a warm welcome, sharing snacks and weekly news, praying together, and reciting The Lord's Prayer. We discuss church news relevant to the children, explore a Bible story, engage in crafts, and play games if time allows.
- April and the Explorers also organise fundraising events throughout the year.
- John Finlayson and Tim Lewington are planning to run crèche activities for parents and preschool children during our morning service - a great way to welcome new families.

### **All-Age Services**

- Tim and I collaborate on planning these services. Our children and young people have become more confident in writing and reading prayers, as well as reading Bible passages. We continue to think of new ways to involve them.
- Our uniformed groups are also invited to join some of our All-Age services. It's always a pleasure to have them with us.

### **Baptisms and Thanksgiving Services**

- I handle enquiries and coordination for baptisms and thanksgiving services, with Tim and me visiting families together to get to know them a little better.

### **Outreach Toddler Groups**

- Our Toddler groups meet on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, with Tim joining on Wednesdays for storytelling and a guitar-accompanied song time.
- We're delighted to see many parents from these groups attending church services throughout the year.
- Families are invited to join us for Easter crafts on Good Friday.

### **Summer Fun**

- Our outdoor family play activities in August, led by Nikki Hill and volunteers, were highly successful.

## **Christingle**

- The Christingle service sees many familiar faces, including children I've known since their reception years who are now in secondary school.

## **Schools Work – Milverton and Brookhurst**

- Our school engagement remains a vital part of our ministry at St Mark's, impacting many children and families.
- I provide mentoring to 15 children, organise playground activities, and coordinate events such as Christmas, Easter, and Harvest celebrations, which draw significant participation from local schools.

## **Emscote House Nursery**

- The annual nursery graduation at St Mark's brings together around 30 children, 200 grandparents, and staff members.

## **Caterpillar Nursery**

- Children and staff visit us to hear the Christmas story and on other occasions throughout the year.

## **Gratitude**

- A heartfelt thank you to everyone involved in our children's ministry. Your dedication and support make all these initiatives possible. As 1 Corinthians 12:27 reminds us, *"You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it."*
- For more information or to join our team, please speak to me or Tim.
- Please keep our children's work and our team in your prayers.

## **PATHFINDERS – Tom & Vandella King**

Pathfinders is a vibrant and engaging group for young people in Year 7 and above, creating a dynamic mix of ages and experiences. The Group is led by Tom and Vandella King, with help from Colum Goodchild on the 1st and 4th Sunday of each month. They meet in the upper room for breakfast from 9.15 am before their session begins at 10.00 am.

- They plan various social events throughout the year, the most recently organised was a pancake party which brought everyone together in a spirit of joy and fellowship.
- Providing a welcoming space for the young people to explore their developing faith, the group meets before the service, from 9.15, for a shared breakfast, offering an opportunity to connect, unwind, chat through their week and prepare for their session. Each Sunday, Pathfinders enjoy a mix of games, activities, and Bible exploration, with time set aside for reflection and prayer. This relaxed yet meaningful approach allows them to ask deeper questions and grow in their understanding of God, and their relationship with Him, while having fun and building friendships.
- Throughout the year, Pathfinders has been active in both investigating the Bible and social events, fostering a strong sense of community.
- Recent Bible topics have included: Looking at the Armour of God, Bible Science - experiments in Faith and Christmas Science - events around the birth of Jesus.

The Pathfinders' team continues to inspire and support the young people in their faith journey, providing a safe and encouraging space for them to explore life's big questions. Extra help is urgently needed in this group on the 3rd and 5th Sundays of each month. If you feel you could help with this, please chat with Tom and Vandella.

## YOUTH GROUP – Sandy Smith

Our young people are a brilliant bunch. They have created a space where they can be themselves, ask honest questions, and grow in faith together. In 2024, they took ownership of their group, choosing the name "**Uno**" - after their favourite card game - reflecting their sense of fun and community.

- **Uno meets on Wednesdays at 7pm during term time** and is open to anyone in Year 7 and above. A typical evening includes games, peer support, plenty of popcorn, and a "**Big Chat**" - a space to explore the Bible and faith. There's also room for the unexpected in the 'Miscellaneous' slot, which can be anything from deep discussions to spontaneous fun.
- Our numbers have been steadily growing. Between September and October 2024, we averaged **9 young people** each week. By November and December, that number rose to **12**, with many bringing friends along.
- In December, they enthusiastically took on the challenge of preparing what felt like **a million Christingle kits** for our Christingle service - showing their teamwork, energy, and willingness to serve the wider church community.

As this group grows, so does our need for **more helpers**. Currently it is Tim and Rebecca with occasional help from others. If you're up for a flexible commitment and want to be part of something special, we'd love to hear from you!

## **SMALL GROUPS – Amanda di Giovanni**

Small Groups have an important role in fulfilling our vision statement: “Belonging... Believing... Becoming... A community of believers, sharing God’s love with the world.”

- We have 9 groups with around 70 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 provide a space to chat, read and discuss God’s word and how to apply it to our lives, and pray for one another.
- A new challenge this year is that groups are encouraged to spend at least one session (evening, Saturday morning etc) in a social action project every year.
- 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.

## **TOGETHER IN MEDITATION – Colum Goodchild**

We meet monthly on the first Thursday of the month at 7.30pm for 40 minutes of silence followed by refreshments.

- Before beginning our silent time together we have a short introduction, a thought for the session. We have used St Patrick’s Breastplate, Julian of Norwich texts, verses from the Psalms and the New Testament as areas of focus.



- We have used different spaces in the church and hall, and used different objects to help our focus including finger labyrinths, hazelnuts and stones.
- We usually have between 4 and 8 people and have been able to offer calm contemplation in the midst of busy lives.

## **CHAPLAINCY AT ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA FE COLLEGE – Marie Calvert**

We are a small team of 6 people (and we'd like to be bigger) who go into Leamington College on a weekly basis during term time, and aim to be a positive and caring presence for both students and staff.

- Offering God's love to students and staff in simple ways
- We 'hang around' the busy area near the refectory and offer sweets and blessings (typed up on strips of paper) to any who would like it. This often leads on to further conversations on wide ranging issues - e.g. the challenges of student life, relationships, stress, etc, and one young man shared how he had been contemplating taking his own life (thankfully no longer the case). Conversations have also included the big questions, e.g. what is God like? Is there even a God? What about the church and its attitudes to different types of people? What about all the wars? Etc.
- We are continuing our staff prayer meetings once a month and these are a source of encouragement. We had a student with special needs who joined us for these for a good number of months, and her radiant openness to God was an inspiration to us all.
- 3 of us were filmed in November, as part of a resource package for the C of E's Further Education Sunday in May.
- Our small but wonderful team comprises: Rani Clare, Pam Griffin-Booth, Bev and Ray Kirton, and also Nigel Smith. We really need a few more people, so please come and chat to me if you'd like to

find out more. It's not onerous and most of us do once every 2-3 weeks, for an hour on a Monday, 12-1.

## **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.
- Details can be found in the Missionary and Charitable Giving section of the 2024 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 received their silver Eco Church Award in October 2024 recognising a lot of hard work from many individuals and groups over the last few years. Some of this work includes:



- We ran our second St Mark's Eco Fair in June 2024 which was once again well attended by around 350 people and raised £1040, half of which went to Eco charities who supported the event.
- Crocus bulbs planted in the lawn outside St Marks are coming up for their second year and looking lovely!
- Some hedging plants were planted around the rear of St Marks early in 2024 and these are growing well and have been given a first gentle pruning.
- We continue to provide recycling facilities in church for cosmetics, pens, glasses, and dental products.

- We have provided tips on eco-living at various times of year such as the lead up to Christmas and over the summer holidays and we are looking to develop a scheme for purchasing eco products at the best possible prices.
- We are part of a successful bid for grant money in Coventry Diocese for a 'Churchyard Biodiversity and Heritage Project', and we are waiting to hear about future developments with this.
- A group visited the Sherbourne Recycling Plant in Coventry to see it in action and to hear about its development, running, and how it supports the environmental disposal of our rubbish.
- Sadly, the wildflower seeding done with WWT does not seem to have taken in the grass; this will be reviewed this year.

The Eco Team would like to thank everyone who has played a part in this work over the year, and we are keen to hear from anyone who has a passion for this area of ministry and any time to spare.

## **CLEANING – Nikki Hill**

We are still keeping the church building clean and tidy ourselves.

- Most groups and individuals clean up after themselves.
- Three people polish our brasses regularly and one energetic gentleman keeps our eagle gleaming.
- Two lovely ladies Hoover the carpets on alternate weeks, clean the toilets & have completed a carpet clean.
- Occasional Saturday morning Spring Cleans are held; normally before special church calendar events like Easter, Harvest and Christmas. All are welcome to come and help with tea and special biscuits served. A special clean of the reredos has been done for Easter, this involves moving the heavy statues.
- 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. If there is an area you would like to cherish, please let me know.

## **FIRS LUNCH – Sidney Syson and Beryl Chisholm**

FIRS (Friends In Retirement – but open to anyone) welcomes all who would like

- a good home cooked lunch for £5
- on the second Tuesday of the month,
- with the opportunity to socialise.
- This year numbers remained in the mid to high 20's, but we could do with more people joining us.

FIRS is a real team effort

- headed by Beryl Chisholm, with Andrew Cooper supplying quizzes.
- table layers and servers and clearer uppers: Pam Griffin-Booth, the Tarrants, the Thomases, the Hambletons and the Sanders. Thank you to you all.
- The cooks. From September to February there were just 2 of us, Jackie Sanders and Sidney Syson. Katie Fermor has now stepped down, Sidney cooked her last meal in January and Jackie Sanders will be retiring in the summer. We express our sincere thanks to all of them for all their work over the years.

Fortunately, Tracy Bevan has offered to take over the cooking side, assisted by Helen Cooper, but we could do with more.

## **GARDENING – Amanda di Giovanni**

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

- We have a land management plan, which includes mowing grass and leaving some areas to grow over the summer.
- All gardening work is done by volunteers, some people look after a particular area, others come to our gardening mornings held 3 or 4 times a year.

Please get in touch if you would like to know more - or have ideas.

## **RAINBOWS – Julie Brown**

The Rainbows children, who are 4 to 7 years old, have been involved in a number of community outreach and fundraising events for the community and beyond throughout 2024.

- Our young leaders have completed Duke of Edinburgh Awards and are completing Bronze and Silver Completing Service within our Unit. They also achieved Gold Lions service awards of 100 hours community service, as well as completing the Girlguiding Young Leaders service awards. Rev Tim Broadbent presented the awarded girls with signed bibles for their amazing show of commitment to the community.
- St Mark's Rainbows have raised over £2,000 for a community defibrillator which was installed on the wall just outside the doors to the Community



Centre. The defibrillator is the only one registered for 24-hour use within this community!

- The Rainbows invited the Trefoil Guild and other special guests to their cream tea at Hollies Tea Rooms.



- The Unit has helped and supported the Rescue Ranch which is a hospice for sick animals that is based in Hatton.

- Rainbows have achieved amazing Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards, and have enjoyed their interactions within church services, both by leading prayers at St

Mark's and by carrying the Remembrance Wreath: this meant a lot to the Unit members. They also took an active part in lighting the Advent candle.

- The girls also attended 2 sleepovers, helped with gardening days and the church Eco Fest, and took part in the Good Friday activities. They also lead a Community Light Party as well as inviting the community to their Easter event with a presentation from Pilgrim Puppets.



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*Thank you to all those who have submitted reports, for all those who help to organise, run, attend and pray for these areas of ministry and outreach.*

*Other than Tim (our Vicar) and Ros (our Children and Families Worker), these are all voluntary roles and there is always scope to get involved or start something new. Please speak to Ros for anything related to children under 11 or Tim for anything else.*

**“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

Rugby Road, Leamington Spa  
CV32 6DL

01926 421 004 / [www.st-marks.net](http://www.st-marks.net)

Reg. charity no. 1128485

