

## **ST MARY THE VIRGIN'S CHURCH, WINGHAM** **ANNUAL REPORT FOR WINGHAM PC**

St Mary's continued to work closely with the other parishes of The Little Stour Benefice to enable people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and coming to know and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and Outreach work.

Church services throughout the year were both priest and lay-led, adding to the richness and variety of local worship. The church also values its role in the community for life's important milestones: baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, burials, interment of ashes and memorial services. We bade a very sad and fond farewell to Gordon Bradley, Churchwarden Emeritus, who served the Parish faithfully for over thirty years.

The Church Building The costs of repairs and improvements required for the church building continued to cause concern, especially in the light of the five yearly Quinquennial Report written in 2024. Last year our architect estimated that up to £150,000 was needed over the next few years. The PCC hope to create an Action Committee with support from the village community to research grants and address the immediate concerns.

As many a householder will tell you, maintaining any building is a constant challenge to keep everything in good order. When the building is over 800 years old, it is almost impossible to know what is going to cause a problem next. In 2025, we were able to carry out repairs to the porch roof and put in hand other smaller works. Our best guess on the condition of the hidden roof timbers in the porch proved optimistic and we had to spend an extra £5000 on the repairs, bringing the total to £32,000. We also discovered other problems with drainage on the north side of the church which we did not know about before. Add to that a fall of plaster in the nave and concerns about the state of some of the wood columns and you can see why we need at least £15,000 a year just for insurance and day-to-day maintenance.

As we look at ways to secure the future of our church, we hope for a wider dialogue with the community to find ways that the space that we have available can contribute more to the life of the village. Churches were always social spaces as well as places of worship and this is something that can benefit everybody, whatever their beliefs. We know that we will need to seek grants to improve the heating, fix the building and keep the organ and the bells in good order.

The Friends The PCC are very grateful to The Friends for their invaluable contributions to life at St Mary's, both financially and socially. We welcome all new members who have joined through the year.

Music The congregation continued to enjoy and be grateful for Patti Whaley's church organ playing and for The Music Group who continued to provide music in church, growing from strength to strength.

The Wingham International Concert Series returns this year for its new season and is well on the way to becoming an important fixture in the cultural life of East Kent. We welcome first class performers from all corners of the world to our Sunday afternoon summer concerts. These have been very successful and an important part of the church's outreach to the local community and beyond as well as raising funds for the church. The PCC are very grateful to Ben Bevan without whom the concerts would not happen, and to his small team of volunteers who helped.

The Meeting Place This popular group continued to meet every Friday morning, offering mutual companionship and sharing of interests, accompanied by light refreshments.

Tiny Tots & Messy Friday for pre-school and primary school children, held monthly on a Friday afternoon. The groups continued to prove popular with the children and their parents/carers. The

children played games, danced to music and enjoyed decorating cakes and creative crafts used to decorate the large board in the church. We are very grateful to the small team of 'Messy Ladies' who run the group and provide refreshments. Members of this team also organised the children's Crib Service on Christmas Eve which was very well attended.

The Parish Magazine The PCC thank Bettina Braun, the Parish magazine editor, and Sue Willis who co-ordinates the circulation. We also thank everyone who delivers and collects payment throughout the village and all those local businesses which support the magazine with their adverts.

The Flower Team The PCC are very grateful to Lesley Mears and her team who regularly decorated the church with flowers by the entrance and the pulpit, and who also produce beautiful floral displays for church festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas. The flower team would always welcome newcomers, whatever their experience.

### Charities

Canterbury Food Bank We continued to support the ever-increasing work of Canterbury Food Bank. As usual, we took our tinned and dry food Harvest gifts to the warehouse and passed on items left in our two yellow bins (inside St. Mary's and Wingham newsagents). Some of our congregation also send financial support, enabling CFB to buy urgently needed foods and toiletries when shortages occur.

The fresh food from the Harvest Festival service was donated to Catching Lives in Canterbury.

The Children's Society We donated all monies raised in the Christingle service to this charity.

The Royal British Legion received all the collection raised at the Remembrance Service.

The Salvation Army led their annual carol concert in the church, with all the collection going to their invaluable work.

The Rising Sun Domestic Violence and Abuse Service in Canterbury The collection raised at the Christmas Eve Crib Service was all donated to this local charity.

Through our outreach activities St Mary's PCC endeavoured to engage the wider community, to engender a feeling that the church belongs to everyone in Wingham.

The church enjoyed hosting services for Wingham Primary School and the annual visit from Wingham Class of Castle Community Primary School, Folkestone, during which the children explored and learnt about St Mary's and its history. The church was also used every Tuesday by the Health Walk group for their refreshments.

The PCC is very grateful for all the support given by Wingham Parish Council through the year, including the grant for the Wingham Burial Ground grass and hedge cutting.

The PCC thank all the team members and volunteers who contribute their time and enthusiasm to St Mary's, bringing all these groups to life. We celebrate the fact that many who attend these groups and activities are not part of the regular congregation but have come to see our church itself as an important and enjoyable part of their own lives.

Finally, we always welcome new faces to the congregation and new volunteers.

You can find us on: Facebook as St Mary's Church Wingham, UK and St Mary's Church Messy Friday, and on [www.little-stour-benefice.org.uk](http://www.little-stour-benefice.org.uk)