

**The Parish Church of
St Mary the Blessed Virgin
Burley-in-Wharfedale**



**Annual Report
of the Parochial Church Council
for the year ended
31st December 2023**

Vicar
Churchwardens

Treasurer
PCC Secretary
Independent Examiner

Bankers

Website:

Rev. Phil Bishop
Mrs. Val McKenzie
Mr. John Spencer
Mr. John Spencer
Mrs. Lis Merrick
Mr. John McGhee

Yorkshire Bank, Brook Street, ILKLEY

<http://www.burleyparishchurch.org.uk/>

Minutes of the APCM held on Sunday 23rd April, 2023

Minutes of the Vestry Meeting

Two nominations had been received for election to the role of church warden: Val McKenzie and John Spencer. They were both elected without objection and some applause.

John made it clear that although he had served as warden for the recommended six years, he was prepared to continue for one further year to smooth the arrival of the new Vicar. He would not be seeking re-election in 2024.

Minutes of the APCM

1. Present and apologies.

42 members of the Electoral Roll were present. Although it had been intended to stream the meeting on YouTube, the internet link had proved impossible to connect.

The meeting was chaired by John Spencer.

Apologies were received from: Susan Collins, Jennifer Cottam, Prem Gurung, Rosemary Hensor, Ann Holmes, Lesley Hoyle, Val McKenzie, Sally McGhee, Lis Merrick, Charles Prest, Paul and Judith Rimmington, Barbara Schofield, Liz Varghese, Carolyn Watts, Karen Selby and Pam Woffindin.

2. Introduction and prayer

John invited Mary Brooks to open in prayer. She did so, asking for God's blessing on our meeting and His inspiration for our deliberations.

3. Electoral roll.

John invited Annette Hattersley, who had been newly appointed as Electoral Roll Officer during the year, to provide this report.

Annette reported that there are currently 167 names on the electoral roll. 6 names have come off during the year, 5 following death and 1 upon request. 6 new people had been added to the roll. If anyone would like to check to ensure they are named on the roll, Annette would be happy to assist them.

4. Annual Financial Report

John read the Treasurer's Report from the Annual Report and Financial Statements which had been distributed before the meeting. He offered particular thanks to the Independent Examiner, John McGhee, who had accepted this role after the last APCM.

He added that the items likely to need costly repair and renewal at the Parish Centre include the lift, security and fire alarm. There are health and safety issues which means these needs cannot be ignored.

John invited questions on the Report and Accounts.

Roger Charnley said he was under the impression that the Parish Centre was a venture of Churches Together and asked whether any of the other denominations in the village contributed to the Centre's upkeep?

Becky Berry replied to the effect that Open Door had originally been an ecumenical project but the Parish Centre itself was not.

5. Churchwarden's Fabric Report

Val McKenzie had prepared the report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. John explained the structural correction which has been needed to the building before the decoration could be undertaken and how this accounted for most of the costs involved.

John drew attention to the quinquennial report which had been undertaken by Pearce Bottomley during the year. Stephen Calvert had now retired and the colleague who had replaced him had slightly different priorities resulting in a number of unanticipated repairs being identified. To address these, costs of £69,000 were anticipated over the next five 5 years, a large part of which are due to the advice to repoint the north end of church, a suggestion which John would seek to have confirmed as really necessary.

A new boiler had been installed in the church lounge. John was in serious trouble with the Diocese as this had been done without the required faculty approval. Val James interjected that at the time of the works, the Chancellor's Directions had not been updated on the Diocesan website to reflect the change (from like for like replacement without need for approval to the Faculty requirement) nor had we been notified directly of the change. John is in dialogue with the Diocese energy advisers, has professional competence in this area and disagrees with their assessment of the situation. This is ongoing.

Questions were invited on Fabric issues.

Hilary Walsh enquired why the shelves had not been reinstated beneath the Memorials to allow for the usual floral displays. John explained that this had been overlooked by the contractors and is on a list of defects which they have 12 months to address. John will specifically raise this issue with the church architect.

Duncan Watts thanked everyone involved in the restoration of the church and commented that in all his 40 years of association with St Mary's, in his view it had never looked better.

6. Minutes of last Annual Meeting

There were no amendments proposed to the minutes as circulated and their acceptance was proposed by Janet Squire and seconded by Hilary Walsh. All were in favour.

Background

The PCC at the Parish Church of St. Mary The Blessed Virgin, Burley in Wharfedale has responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), in accordance with the Church Representation Rules, elects members of the PCC.

The following served as members of the PCC from April 2023 to December 2023.

NAME	ROLE	TERM OF OFFICE
Rev Phil Bishop	Vicar	From July 2023
John Spencer	Church Warden	Annual Appointment
Valerie McKenzie	Church Warden	Annual Appointment
John Spencer	Treasurer	
Sally McGhee	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Frances Robinson	Deanery Synod	Elected until 2026 AGM
Mary Brooks	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Lis Merrick	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Liz Varghese	Elected Member	Elected until 2025 AGM
Susan Collins	Elected Member	Elected until 2025 AGM
Becky Berry	Elected Member	Resigned Dec 2023
Catriona Wilkinson	Elected Member	Elected until 2024 AGM. To resign at AGM.
Annette Hattersley	Elected Member	Elected until 2024 AGM. To be voted on for another 3 years.
Paul Rimmington	Elected Member	Elected until 2025 AGM
Janita Dibb	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM
Karen Selby	Elected Member	Elected until 2026 AGM

Standing Committee

Rev. Phil Bishop (Vicar – from July 2023), John Spencer (Warden) Val McKenzie (Warden), John Spencer (Treasurer), Lis Merrick (PCC Secretary), Mary Brooks (Lay Reader), Susan Collins, Annette Hattersley and Becky Berry (until Dec 2023).

Officers of the PCC

Vice Chair	Church Warden
Treasurer	John Spencer
Secretary	Lis Merrick
Minutes Secretary	Ella Holdsworth (from July 2023)
Electoral Roll Officer	Annette Hattersley
Disability and Vulnerable	Margaret Young
Adults Rep	
Safeguarding Rep	Dot Armstrong and Mary Brooks

Electoral Roll

Following the Annual Revision of the Electoral Roll, there are currently 171 names on the Roll, 25 of whom are non-residents. There are 2 removals from the Parish of which sadly, 2 are deaths since last year. The next full revision will be in 2025.

The Church of England states that the Roll must be published showing every name, but no other personal data.

ANNETTE HATTERSLEY, ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER

CHURCH STATISTICS 2023

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Baptisms	11	17	12	0	19	13	17	14	27	26
Weddings	1	5	2	3	4	2	11	6 plus 2 blessings	4	9
Funerals	15 8 in church	17 15 in church	12 10 in church	18 12 in church	29 18 in church	20 12 in church	19 12 in church	16 11 in church	23 14 in church	23 10 in church
Confirmations	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
Easter Day Communicants	96	110	54	0	170	167	204	207	171	183
Christmas Day Communicants	58	46	69	53	124	133	209	179	91	108
Normal Sunday Attendance – Adults	69	56	N/A	N/A	97	106	112	107	101	112
Normal Sunday Attendance – Under 16	5	11	N/A	N/A	14	15	22	20	28	25

Baptisms, Weddings and funerals

These are all lower numbers than in 2022.

Easter Day and Christmas Day

There were 14 less communicants at the Easter Day service in 2023 than in 2022, down from 110 in 2022 to 96 in 2023. However, there were 12 more communicants on Christmas Day 2023, 58, than in 2022 when we had 46 in attendance.

Adults

Many churches have recorded a decrease in their congregation numbers following two years of lockdown. The statistics for St Mary's are showing a very slow, but definite increase in numbers of people returning to church on both the Thursday

morning and Sunday morning services. Although, as can be seen from the above table, the numbers still haven't reached pre-pandemic numbers.

The **8.00 am Communion** services were fairly consistent with an average of 13 people in the congregation, an increase of 1 since 2022. The lowest number recorded at one service was 5 and the highest 21.

The **average attendance** for the **10.00 am Communion** services is 69, an increase of 12 from last year. Adult attendances varied between 34 and 143. The latter being the attendance at Phil's Collation and Induction. Another high attendance number was on Easter Day 96 (adults only).

The highest number of adults at a **Connect Together** Service was 67 on Palm Sunday.

The highest number of adults at a **Service of the Word** was 58. Although two other services surpassed this with 71, when Bishop Nick presided and 110 at the Flower Festival service.

The **total average for adults at all Sunday services** during 2023 is 69. An increase of 13 on last year.

The average was calculated using numbers of people who attended the 10.00am services including Holy Communion, Connect Together and Service of the Word. The attendances of adults at the larger, one-off services e.g. Flower Festival, funerals and school services were not used in these calculations.

Children

At the **10.00 am Communion** services there was an average of 3 children during 2023. The lowest number of children at a service was 1 and the highest was 15, at the Easter Day service.

The **Connect Together** Services had an average of 9 children. The lowest at one service was 3 and the highest 21.

Due to the **Connect** Services being held on Saturday at the Parish Centre, I'm unsure if all statistics have been recorded in the Register. So, these statistics are representative of the 6 services recorded. An average of 5 children came to Connect services. The lowest at one service was 1 and the highest was 8.

The average attendance of children at the **Connect Together and Connect Together** services in 2023 was 7.

The **total average for children at all Sunday services** during 2023 was 5. A decrease of 6 on last year.

The average was calculated using numbers of children who attended the 10.00am services including Holy Communion, Connect Together and Service of the Word. The attendances of children at the larger, one-off services e.g. Flower Festival (24) Christingle services or School services were not used.

It is disappointing that the reduced numbers of children coming to our services, does not reflect the hard work put in by the volunteers who facilitate and provide activities for the Connect Together and Connect services. Thank you to you all for your generosity of time and your creativity.

VAL MCKENZIE, CHURCH WARDEN

THE REPORTS

A word from Mary Brooks

We started the year without a vicar and are very grateful to Barry, Chris and Denis and a number of visiting clergy who have taken our services and supported us. There were many lay led services too – the first was a celebration of Epiphany with one of the kings arriving on an inflatable camel!!

Easter last year was rather different, we were grateful to Father Michael, Jason and Tim for their help and we all enjoyed sharing services with the other churches in the village. We celebrated Maundy Thursday with a communion in our church, on Good Friday there was an ecumenical Act of Witness at the Grange and an Hour Before the Cross at the URC. Easter Saturday, we held our usual Easter Vigil and were joined by folk from the other churches in the village.

In June we held a Flower Festival – the first for many years and it was a lovely weekend with lots of people visiting and admiring the amazing arrangements. We welcomed choirs from both Burley Oaks and Burley Woodhead Schools and others who provided musical entertainment. Bishop Toby led a joyful service on the Sunday morning and we were blessed with lovely weather!! It was very special to have so many people involved and working together, flower arrangers, tea makers, bakers, organisers, a huge thank you to everyone who helped make it such a successful event.

In July, Phil was licensed by Bishop Toby and we welcomed him and his wife Caroline. The church was full with Phil's family and friends, parishioners from his previous parish and many people from Burley.

And from the Rev. Phil Bishop

My thanks to Mary for writing about the first 7 months of 2024, before my arrival.

I am delighted to have been appointed vicar of St Mary's, and thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful welcome as I was licensed, collated, inducted, and installed!

With my wife, Caroline, as newcomers to this part of Yorkshire, we have been familiarising ourselves with the village and local area, meeting local people and groups, although even now, we feel as if we are still getting our bearings. We have been exploring the parish, Prayer Walking or walking and cycling, praying as we go, and having many interesting conversations along the way.

One early impression was of how much goes on in the village and how hard people work to cultivate a sense of community identity and cohesion. A great example of this is the Burley Festival, which, just a few weeks after our arrival, was a great

opportunity to meet people both in the church and the wider community. There was no Praise in the Park in 2023, but we are planning to hold it again in 2024.

I've appreciated fellowship with and the initiative and support of the other church leaders in the village at a variety of different services, and as we begin to make plans to launch Churches Together in Burley. Fr Michael retired in August, although he kindly attended my licensing service to welcome me, and Fr Tim Swinglehurst became the new minister for SS Fisher More as well as Sacred Heart Ilkley.

In October, at our Harvest Service we collected contributions for the Foodbank in Manningham.

In November, we took part in the Ecumenical Remembrance Day Services at the Grange which was well supported by the village community, both for a short time of remembrance on 11/11/23 and on Remembrance Sunday itself. The week before, we held our annual memorial service for those who have lost loved ones, to which we invite those who have been bereaved recently.

Christmas begins early in Burley with the Christmas lights going up, and I was invited to speak at community "switch on" event, another of those events that brings the community together.

Both the Ecumenical Advent Carol Service and our own Christmas Carol Service were joyful occasions, and we are grateful to the St. Mary's Singers for leading our singing at these and other services during the year.

Christmas was a particularly busy period, and with Christmas Eve being a Sunday, we held 7 services in 27 hours, including the two very well attended Christingle services. These were ably supported by a semi-industrial production line coordinated by Jo, and then in the service by the band who provided the music.

We conducted 11 baptisms in the last year. Since my arrival we have offered an Alpha Course to those bringing their children for baptism, to help them understand the nature and significance of the promises they are making, and an on-line course ran from October into 2024.

I'd like to include a few words of thanks on behalf of us all:

- Firstly, I'd like to record our enormous thanks to our wardens, Val and John, to all the deputy wardens, and the PCC for their hard work on behalf of the church.
- I am incredibly grateful for the support of Mary, Barry, Denis, Ros, Chris and the Connect team, in leading services since I've arrived, but also for all they did in the months of vacancy when there was so much more to cover in the

absence of a vicar. Chris has continued to faithfully lead Morning Prayer on a Monday on Zoom.

- And thanks to all the volunteers and staff who support in so many different and often unseen ways, in our different projects and groups, in administration and keeping the Parish Centre and office running, in prayer and pastoral visiting, in supporting worship and music, participating in our services, providing refreshments, in ensuring the church is open during the day allowing a space for private prayer, and in cleaning, decorating and maintaining the church and grounds.

From the start, I stated I was not intending to make any major changes in my first 6 months, although a new vicar inevitably brings a different approach in some aspects of church life. However, in mid-November, I introduced the idea that we would be embarking on a Healthy Church process, starting early in 2024 to explore and discern God's leading in how we should move forward as a church. I believe our first call as God's people is to pray, to seek his face and in so doing better understand how he is leading us. This process will build upon the work that was done around vision in the vacancy, and as a journey toward growing healthier as a church, this will develop during 2024.

God is a God of mission, and he calls us to participate in his mission, as we share the love of God with our community in word and deed. While there are clearly challenges that we face at St Mary's, but there are also tremendous opportunities to serve God and his mission in Burley and beyond. It is my hope and my prayer that God will grow us as a church as we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

Church Warden's Report on the Fabric of the Church

I am pleased to report that, due more from necessity than planning, we have managed to address some of the items within the Quinquennial Report 2022 that were recommended to be done within 12 months of the survey.

Work on the following items have now been done:

- Item 3.2 Nave Roof – missing tile replaced and the tear in the felt replaced/repared.
- Item 3.15 Nave North Slope – slipped slates at ridge level and one missing slate. All tiles levelled and secured. Missing tile replaced.
- Item 4.30 Corridor Peeling and flaking paint and plaster on ceiling due to water ingress. Water ingress has been resolved. Ceiling has been painted.
- Item 4.34 WC Signs of historic damp. The roof above has been repointed and a new extractor fan fitted. This should prevent water ingress and damp from above.

The lounge was looking very neglected and dark and was becoming very cluttered. The PCC agreed that redecoration was needed in addition to the fitting of a new carpet. These works were completed in April-May. It was decided that the curtains were still in good order so were washed and rehung.

Enquiries were made to a roofer in May with regard to the reason why there was peeling paint on the ceiling of the corridor next to the lounge area. We then decided that while he was in the vicinity he could look at replacing the missing tile and straightening the church roof tiles. This had been identified in the Quinquennial Report. Scaffolding had to be erected on the North and South sides of the church to enable the roofers access to all of the church roof. They also cleared the gutters.

While they were on site, torrential rain weakened the extractor fan on the roof above the toilet, adjacent to the lounge kitchen. The extractor fan was replaced. Water had entered the electrics in the ceiling lights of the toilet. These were tested and replaced where necessary.

Church Boilers in the cellar. For a while the church was being heated with only one boiler. The heating engineer eventually repaired the second boiler. A new 'Nest' was installed in church. This enables John and Val to adjust the heating remotely without having to come down to church to make manual adjustments.

The lock on the main church door had to be replaced and is working much better than the previous lock.

Since deciding to make the entrance to the lounge area an additional escape route, the door from church into the vestry corridor, is now left unlocked. The exit door from the lounge area has been fitted with a push pad for an easier exit. The two lounge doors, kitchen and toilet doors are all lockable for security reasons. All of these doors had identical barrels fitted. This enables them to be locked with a shared key.

The church clock in the tower was running slow. The Church Clock Engineer from BMDC identified a broken part and temporarily silenced the church bells until a replacement part was fitted. The clock is now showing the correct time and the bells are chiming once again.

The information below is from the Quinquennial Report and was included in last year's Fabric Report. I have included it again in this year's Report so that you can follow any progress we are making in this regard. I'm afraid cost constraints are preventing us from fulfilling the recommendations made by the architect within her timescale.

Requires attention within 12 months. £32750

Work has been identified in the roof, repointing with lime mortar of church walls and boundary walls, lamps in need of repair and repainting, repainting of church and boiler room doors, cleaning the clock motor in the clock tower, checking safety of gravestones, structural engineer to inspect boundary walls, relaying a new path leading to the Garden of Rest.

Requires attention within next 12-24 months £19800

Repointing of specific areas, repainting of church doors, boiler room door, flag pole, window openers in church lounge. Clean and secure three windows in the roof space. De-rusting and repainting of various pieces of metal work in the clock tower, the railings near the boiler room. Repair to bell frame. Conservation clean of chancel windows and repair of the openers.

Requires attention within the quinquennial period £6500

Repointing, repainting of the West Door, ironmongery and handrail. All windows in the Nave conservation clean.

A desirable improvement with no timescale £12000

Rake out cementitious mortar around the clock faces and replace with soft lime. Repair and reinstate the cast iron lamp at the front of the church.

To be kept under observation over the Quinquennium

Repointing, damp in the boiler room, fracture and damage to the tiles in the Sanctuary.

Once again, I would like to thank John Spencer for his support in my second year as Church Warden. He continues to amaze me with his knowledge of the church's past maintenance history. What an asset to have, not only as a member of our congregation but as a Church Warden. Thank you, John, from me and the congregation at St Mary's. We realise that you retire as Church Warden this year after seven years. Thank you for continuing as 'Clerk of Works'.

We have a beautiful well maintained, warm church. Thank you so much to the members of the congregation who have and continue to give very generous donations. We are grateful for all the bequests from past members of our congregation and to all of you who give regularly to the Church.

VAL MCKENZIE, CHURCH WARDEN

PCC Secretary's Report

The Parochial Church Council shares the leadership of St. Mary's Church with the clergy.

As well as the day to day receiving and sending of information and emails from the Diocese and members of the Parish, it has a legal responsibility for the financial affairs of the Parish and the maintaining of its assets, which are St. Mary's Church buildings and the Parish Centre.

The PCC is made up of the Vicar (position filled from July 2023), 2 Church Wardens, a Lay Reader and members elected from the electoral roll who worship at St. Mary's Church.

We held 8 PCC Meetings during 2023, which were held in the Parish Centre (except for the January 2023 meeting) and one virtual meeting (April 2023).

In 2023 some of the agenda items we discussed included recruitment for our new Vicar, Church fabric, the Parish Centre, Safeguarding, Church security and finances.

LIS MERRICK, PCC SECRETARY

Treasurer's Report

This is my third Treasurers Report to the APCM, the report has again been put together with the invaluable help of Duncan Watts, who again has assisted with some of the more prosaic aspects of the accounting profession. We must also thank our examiner John McGhee who has stepped in to provide the necessary independence to these accounts.

The day-to-day operation of the church has generated a substantial loss of around £30,000. We did however pay our parish share in full. This is by far our greatest expense, and I know from conversations with the diocese how grateful they are that we continue to pay this. Although this looks substantial it is artificially held at a lower amount than the Diocese would like, due to a maximum percentage of any church income that can be paid through the Parish Share.

This loss is substantial and in the long term unsustainable. As you will be aware there has been a service and presentation on the issues of the church finances at a recent service. I hope this was informative and allowed the congregation to be better informed on the present financial difficulties.

As set out in the last years report the coming year will see significant cost increases associated with the purchase of energy and ongoing support to the Parish Centre.

Unless we can generate a significant increase in bookings at the Parish Centre the ongoing losses will need to be subsidised by the Church.

The overall balance sheet has reduced by around £31,000 mainly due to the losses we have incurred supporting the church and the parish centre and their day to day operation. It is hoped that in the coming year we can reduce the amount spent on the maintenance of the buildings however with both buildings and especially the church the work is often unexpected and is required to allow the church to run and not to deteriorate.

Can I thank all the people who help me with the finances of the church, to Val McKenzie for the envelopes, for Jason Atkinson for dealing with the collections, petty cash and transferring this to the bank and also to Karen Selby for taking on the role of Parish Centre treasurer.

Can I finally thank everyone who contributes to the ongoing finances of the church, either through individual donations or the Central giving Scheme.

JOHN SPENCER, TREASURER

Deanery Synod Report

The South Craven and Wharfedale Deanery is a group of 12 churches in the north of the Bradford Diocese. Parishes are spread from Lothersdale and Cowling, in the west, to Menston, in the east. Deanery Synod meetings take place 3 times a year both on Zoom, in the winter, and in person.

The first meeting of 2023 was on Zoom and Deanery Synod members were given a presentation by Rev Jude Smith who is the Director of Church Revitalisation for the Diocese of Leeds. Rev Jude Smith spoke about 'Barnabas – encouraging confidence in God, mission and future witness'. After the presentation members were able to discuss the points raised in the talk in smaller breakout rooms.

In July there was an in-person meeting at St Mary's Church, Bradley. The meeting included the formal reconvening of the Deanery Synod with the Deanery Synod Secretary, Chair of the House of Laity and standing committee members being elected. A presentation about the work of the Otley Resources Hub was given by Lizzie Reynolds, Mandy Thorlby and Rev Peter Willox.

The final meeting of the year was held at St Margaret's, Ilkley. At this meeting the Diocesan Environmental Officer, Jemima Parker, gave a talk entitled 'Getting started on our journey to be a net zero carbon church'. There was an opportunity to ask questions after the presentation. Environmental issues are an area which Deanery Synod members are keen to address.

Deanery Synod meetings are an opportunity for initiatives in the diocese to be shared on a local level as well as for Churches to support each other through the sharing of ideas about what has worked well for them and what they would like to try.

FRANCES ROBINSON

Connect

Connect is our monthly service at 3pm on a Saturday afternoon, it is an informal service with music, prayers craft activities and food. Though numbers are low those who come appreciate the relaxed atmosphere and the welcome they receive, for some it is the only service they attend. Though now most also attend Connect Together.

Connect Together is our multi-generational interactive service which is held on the first Sunday of each month in church. This service is really well supported by our traditional congregation and we are very grateful for their loyalty. This is a very flexible and varied service at which there is something for everyone. It varies from month to month, we spend the first part of the service together in song and prayer, then for those who prefer to stay in their seats there is either a short reflection or we watch a video and questions are posed to facilitate discussion with those seated near us. There are also always creative craft activities to be enjoyed by adults as well as children. We then join together again to share what we have been doing, and to finish with prayer and song. Refreshments and fellowship follow.

MARY BROOKS

Parish Centre

Staff

Our Parish Administrator, Jo Moseley has been working for us now since August 2022. She has been exceptional with her communication skills and support of all the members of staff both paid and volunteers. Her role is to support the vicar and the volunteers that do church related jobs in the Parish Centre. Whilst her work location is usually from the Parish Centre (PC) office, there are occasions when Jo may need to work from home to do certain jobs for us.

At the beginning of 2023 Zoe, the Parish Centre Manager was unable to work due to ill health. Unfortunately, this continued into April when Zoe terminated her contract. The months from January to April and the remaining months until a replacement manager was employed, were a struggle for the volunteer staff and Jo. Although

this wasn't in Jo's Job Description, she supported everyone in the office as much as she could.

Welcome to Carol O'Connor, our new Parish Centre Manager who started work in November 2023. We hope that you enjoy working in your new role. I'm sure you will be supported by all the office staff to make your transition into the role as smooth as possible.

Pearl, one of our volunteer administrators for the PC, by default, is responsible for room bookings. She not only keeps the booking system updated but she is the person who 'sells' the rooms to potential hirers and maintains their room bookings. Her enthusiasm and customer care to our hirers is exceptional. She has also produced wonderful posters to promote room hire in the Parish Centre (PC). These are displayed in the PC window and on Facebook. During Burley Festival week, Pearl created a colourful and eye-catching advertising display of our current volunteers and materials to encourage people to become PC volunteers. Thank you, Pearl for all the additional hours you have given plus your usual volunteering time on Tuesdays.

Our other volunteers, Joyce Russell, Linda Nelson, Pam Sowman, Steven Jolly, David Sowman, Chris Nelson and Greg Learmonth, have many years of unstinting service to the PC. Thank you to you all. We owe you our gratitude for all that you do and have done.

A special mention and thank you to Pearl and Steven Jolly who have provided so many additional hours of their time as volunteer caretakers at weekends and 'out of hours', opening and closing the PC and setting up the room for parties. This level of service can only be positive and hopefully bring new customers or return bookings.

It needs to go on record that the PC would have closed its doors this year, had it not been for the hard work and loyalty of all the staff during the whole year.

We also have a new PC treasurer, Karen Selby, who has taken over from Martin Russell, who served in this role for many years and we would like to formally record our thanks to him. (This responsibility is no longer the domain of John Spencer who has been Treasurer of both the PC and church for two years. He does continue to be our Church Treasurer. Thank you, John, for all the hours you have given to this task.)

Activities during 2023

Church groups

- Connect on Saturday
- Mother's Union

- Ladies Group
- Youth Group
- Facing Outward, tea and cake coffee mornings
- Tiny Tadpoles
- Cuppa cake and Company
- Open Door, a community outreach project, continues as a much-loved group by its members and volunteers.

Fee paying Groups

- Tom Clegg continues to run two busy music classes each week. Ukulele Jammers, on a Monday evening and the Wharfe Valley Social Club on a Tuesday morning.
- Ilkley U3A now has three groups that regularly use the PC for Craft and for Spanish and for German speaking classes.
- Vole Ballet use the Jepson Room weekly.
- We are also grateful for the support from the much-needed community health service groups to the Centre. We have hosted several NCT events and the weekly NHS Health Visitor “Well Baby” clinic on a Tuesday morning. This drop-in style clinic provides a vital weighing service for young babies and offers support and advice to new parents.
- The Memory Tree is coordinated by Susan Collins, supported by her group of volunteers. This team provide friendship, activities, singing, quizzes, the occasional outing to the theatre, and ‘time together and time apart’ for their members who are living with dementia and their carers.

The continuation of these income-generating classes has been invaluable to the Centre during 2023.

New bookings

- Home Instead, a private company that provides care for people in their home, has become quite a regular user of our facilities for social events for their customers.
- New groups and courses for 2023 also include, Singing for Lung Health, Bee Keeping course, Family Links Programme (sponsored by the NHS to provide support with parenting skills). The duration of these varies from a one off to courses lasting a few weeks.
- There have been coffee mornings for various charitable causes: NSPCC, Western Nepal, Borneo and 1st Burley Brownies (for Katiyo School)

Where the PC staff have been approached by private businesses to hire our rooms at a very generous rate. Very often, the room they prefer is the Sutcliffe Room. This involves a lot of work from the office staff to reorganise existing users of that room. This is where Pearl’s negotiating skills come to the fore when rebooking paying

customers into other rooms in the building. We also hope that any 'church' groups who use the Sutcliffe Room, understand that we cannot afford to lose these bookings from private businesses. Any change of room is not a permanent one.

The Sutcliffe Room

The refurbished and renovated room is used by 'Open Door' and other groups and used to be called 'Open Door'. It is now renamed the 'Sutcliffe Room'. There was a renaming ceremony on 26th of August when Peter Sutcliffe's wife Alison, cut the ribbon. It was an afternoon of memories, celebration and hospitality, enjoyed by many, I'm sure.

Phase two of the alterations to this room has been put on hold. Unfortunately, finances are not available to progress these at the present time.

VAL MCKENZIE, CHURCH WARDEN, TRUSTEE OF THE PARISH CENTRE

Safeguarding Report

It is now a requirement that Self Declaration Forms are completed annually. I am in the process of distributing these and I aim to have them all collected in and filed away by the time of this meeting.

DBS checks have been carried out on everyone who works with children and youths. It is up to each individual to join 'The Update Service' and keep their own records which are emailed annually. Failure to do this means that the DBS has to be repeated every three years.

Last year The PCC adopted The Diocesan Policy, which is displayed both in Church and at The Parish Centre. New Childline posters are also on display at these entrances.

I have kept my training up to date throughout my time as Parish Safeguarding Officer. It has to be updated every three years. Most of The PCC have their training up to date. They have to complete Basic Awareness, Foundations and Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse. The Church Wardens also have to study Safer Recruitment and Leadership.

Everyone who works with either children, youths or vulnerable adults is required to complete Basic Awareness and Foundations. This also applies to Open Door and Cuppa Cake volunteers.

I would like to say a huge thank you to Mary Brooks who very kindly supported me until Rev'd Phil Bishop arrived. Mary and I successfully facilitated Online Training Sessions for both Basic Awareness (CO) and Foundations (C1) on 14 March 2023 and on 15 May 2023. We had 10 attendees on both dates. This was a great

achievement. Certificates were emailed out to everyone and I printed copies for those who didn't have a computer.

I have made a start on The Parish Dashboard ready for the next Parish Safeguarding Officers to continue.

I had hoped that two successors would have been appointed and have been working with me by now, but I understand that recruitment is still in progress.

I am stepping down from this job on 30 April, 2024. I will have done the job for the past six years. Over that time there have been many new regulations and changes and the workload and responsibility has grown. I would like to thank all those who have complied with my many requests. My aim has always been to keep St. Mary's Church and Parish a safe one.

Please remember — Safeguarding is everyone's business.

DOT ARMSTRONG, PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

Schools

There are three junior schools in the parish, our relationships with all three are good. The Methodist minister visits Burley Oaks, the children there have visited Open Door in the Parish Centre visited the Parish Centre and entertained our guests at Open Door.

Burley Woodhead is our church school and that is where we have most contact. The school's aim is to ensure that all the children are happy, fulfilled and challenged; that their individual needs are catered for and that they develop a love for learning.

There is regular collective worship at which Christian values and attitudes are affirmed. We are invited to take a weekly assembly in school and attend a weekly 'Big Question' session to provide a distinctly Christian viewpoint to the current philosophical question that is being discussed. – it can be a very challenging session!!

Throughout the year (when possible, in church) the major festivals are celebrated and children from different year groups visit the church on different occasions to amplify parts of the national curriculum. As a Church of England school distinctly Christian values are at the core of all that is done: "Many parts one body" (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Over the last year they have celebrated Easter, the end of the school year, and Christmas in church. This has provided an amazing opportunity for outreach as we have been able to welcome families who would otherwise not have been in church.

Head teacher, Jo Siddall, was given an emotional farewell as her contribution to the life of the school was acknowledged in the services at the end of the summer term. Then in September, we welcomed a new head teacher, Nina Dobson, who has brought a fresh perspective and renewed vision to the school, and we look forward to seeing how the school develops under her leadership.

MARY BROOKS

St Mary's Church Youth Group

Our youth group welcomes young people from Schools Years 6 through to Year 13 and we currently have a wide age range represented.

We meet usually every other Sunday at the Parish Centre, 6:00-7:30pm.

Our meet ups are really relaxed and fun, and we aim to have lots of lively debate and discussion about all things life and faith. There is nothing we can't talk about and no question that can't be asked. We enjoy learning together and growing in our understanding of faith.

The sessions always involve some games and food too so that everyone has a chance to get to know each other really well.

Over the past year we have been exploring the Urban Saints material for youth called Energize which is a really exciting mix of video, games, discussion themes and Bible study.

We have asked questions about who God is and the nature of God, and why Jesus came to live amongst us and what we know about Him and His character.

Bible study has been important too, so we have looked at different versions of the Bible and how stories are written in them and looked at some of the Biblical heroes and what they can teach us today.

We also enjoy a good Christian film night here and there too, and love a good social!

New members are always welcome. You do not have to attend a church and you don't even have to be sure you have a faith. Come along and find out what it's all about!

BECKY BERRY

Open Door

After the refurbishment of the Sutcliffe Room, Open Door moved back into its original home in January. With the long break from meeting face to face during Covid and a reduction in the number of the OD volunteers, the project returned offering 3 weekly sessions, Monday am, Tuesday pm and Thursday am, with the first Monday in the month being a Fund-Raising Coffee Morning run by the Outreach Group. Visitors, including quite a few new ones, have continued to use the project evidencing that, even with more choice of sociable groups and cafes available in the village, Open Door does continue to fulfil a need within the community. The number of visitors visiting sessions can be as many as fourteen, but more usually around half of that.

Updates taking place:

- All current volunteers have updated their safeguarding training.
- The volunteer role description has been updated. Further amendments to information provided will be required once facilities are in place and the room better meets our membership as 'A Place of Welcome' and 'Warm Space'.
- Four new volunteers were recruited during the year.
- The link with Burley Oaks Primary School has continued to thrive with, at the beginning of the year a full-page article in the Ilkley Gazette about our wellbeing connection with the school. Then two further meetings for games and to hear their school choir perform at McCarthy Stone Care Home at Christmas.
- Volunteers, during the year have been discussing how better to develop the physical space in the room and the option of offering some activities within current sessions or in an added session.

Hopefully 2024 will prove to be a year of action and renewal for Open Door in its 28th Year.

JOYCE RUSSELL

Cuppa, Cake & Company

This is a monthly social event for elderly people who may be lonely and who have little opportunity to leave their homes.

Volunteers

We have a pool of six volunteers (including myself). We organise the event, prepare the room and serve tea and cakes. We make efforts to know everyone's name and

to ensure there is a warm welcoming atmosphere. We engage the attendees in conversation and pay particular attention to those who may need extra support to socialise.

Attendance

Attendance throughout the year has again been excellent. We are full to capacity each month. This is in part due to taking several hours each month to telephone everyone (appx 32 people) a few days beforehand to remind and encourage people to attend. Some, who we know have memory difficulty, we will call again on the day to further remind them. Those who we know are ill, we continue to call for a short chat. We feel it is nice to be invited even though we know the person is not likely to be able to attend currently. This helps people to feel included and looking forward to re-attending when they are well enough.

We have unfortunately lost a number of people who have passed away this year or who are now in a Care Home or no longer able to attend. However, we have continued to gain new members throughout the year, some have heard of us by word of mouth, others are referred to us by the Social Prescriber at Grange Park Surgery.

The Ilkley Community Transport bus (which is a charity) continues to be used to bring those people who otherwise could not attend, which is generally around 10 – 14 people. This is an excellent service and is to be highly commended. It is provided at a very good rate of only £34. The charity are currently fund-raising to replace one of their aged buses.

Entertainment

We continue to invite a professional entertainer, usually a singer or a group to most events. The audience greatly enjoy this and there is often plenty of sing-a-long.

Finances

The total costs for 2023 were £1,147.

This comprises, room hire, tea/coffee, cakes, transport and entertainment.

This leaves a balance of £1,543 to carry forward into 2024, which is sufficient to fund until mid-2025.

Much of the above was provided by a grant from the local Co-op.

We do need to look towards further sponsorship to secure continuation beyond mid-2025.

The above funds sit within the general Parish Centre account. It may be better if they were separated. Often one of the key rules for accessing charitable grants is that the charity must have its own named personal bank account.

PEARL JOLLY, VOLUNTEER CUPPA, CAKE & COMPANY

Burley Cares, bereavement care

Sally and I continue to offer some form of care to those families who have been bereaved during the year. This is usually in the form of a letter remembering those who have died, offering support if needed and informing them of the Memorial Service held each year, the Tree of Remembrance in church at Christmas and the Book of Remembrance which is open in church. This year the Memorial Service was held in November. It was a short, quiet service led by Phil and Mary with a chance for people to light a candle in memory of a loved one. It was followed by refreshments and a chance for people to meet. Those who had been bereaved in the past 3 years were invited and about 50 people came.

Sally and I are aware that we are limited in what we offer at present and look forward to expanding our team under Phil's guidance.

JANET SQUIRE AND SALLY MCGHEE

St Mary's Singers

We continue to be the 'stand in' choir to lead the congregation when we have an organist. We would not be here without Edward Scott who plays for many of the services. I am sure it is not just The Singers who greatly value his contribution to our worship. We were very pleased to hear of the intended appointment of Andrew Radley as our new musical director. He helped prepare us for the Christmas services and we look forward to working with him. We were very sad to lose one of our number, Roger Cloughton, and we are pleased Vanessa continues as one of the Singers. We welcome anyone who would like to join us. There are no requirements to joining but I think it helps the congregation if we are there to lead. Hopefully one day we will have a church choir again.

JANET SQUIRE, YVONNE EDWARDS AND THE SINGERS

Christian Aid

I would like to start by thanking everyone who supported Christian Aid during the year. There appears to be increasing need in our very divided world and as Christians we are called to share what we have. We know that the rising cost of living is making it more difficult for some to be as generous as they would like, but

every gift is valued. This report mentions the totals the committee have raised in cash donations. Many people now give online where the donations can be 'Gift Aided' and our totals do not reflect this. We recognise the advantages to this way of giving and thank everyone who donates in this way.

We were able to offer 3 Lent Lunches in 2023 and it was good to see people coming together once more at this time. Thank you to the many who supported the lunches, made soup, offered to help or supply bread. A total of £455 was sent to the Christian Aid Lent and Easter Appeal.

Christian Aid week in May started with the Christian Aid coffee morning (£330.03) and continued with an envelope collection among the different churches which raised an overall total of £945.03. In addition, £45 was sent to the Christmas Appeal.

Thank you again for your generous support.

JANET SQUIRE, CHRISTINE CLARK, MARY WOOD AND THE BURLEY CHRISTIAN AID COMMITTEE.

Burley-Tereli Friendship Trust

This wonderful link has continued and grown through the friendship and commitment of people from the communities of Burley and Tereli in Mali. Our chief link continues to be with Tenousse, a pharmacist running his own company in the capital, Bamako. Zakari continues in his stressful role as a surgeon in Bamako. He works with cancer sufferers who often present in advanced stages of disease to this, one of the few hospitals available in the country. Here we welcomed Shirley Moffat as our new trustee.

Mali is under military control and the promised election has not been held. This adds to an already insecure situation with Jihadist incursions from the north which destroy villages and displace communities. The French and the UN have both withdrawn from this situation and only the Russian Wagner group have any military control in the area near Tereli. The insecurity, the loss of tourism and the erratic weather patterns make life especially hard.

We offer financial support for projects initiated in the Dogon area of Mali where Tereli is situated. BTFT works alongside JOLIBA, a larger British charity which works in Mali, and with AEERTTPS, a group of educated young people from Tereli. Through Joliba, we have been able to send £15,000 for wells in 3 villages which have lost their wells. Access to local clean water sets women and girls free to set up small enterprise businesses and generate income for their families. We continue to support environmental projects, particularly a Joliba tree planting initiative, the

Tereli Dispensary and Maternity, and plans to develop a small soap making project to provide local employment.

Mary and John Wood had the opportunity to meet Zakari in France in the summer. Such meetings strengthen our link.

We are very grateful for the continued financial support from the PCC and Coffee and Cake. Thank you. Other income is from fundraising. Chris Inglehearn ran the Ilkley half marathon and raised over £3,052.57. The sale of calendars and Christmas cards raised £1,413.80 and donations at Christmas, £1,395. Ticket sales for the Ladies Please concert in the summer festival raised over £1,078. Mugs, keyrings and coasters were also sold. Birthday donations, and donations from local talks all added to the total.

Stop press news. Mirella and Mary are in the final stages of writing a book about our link, Mirella (Our chairperson) being the author and Mary (Treasurer and inspirational trustee) the researcher. Full of colour photos, it is a wonderful record of the huge achievements of over 20 years of friendship.

Many, many thanks to everyone who supports us in any way.

JANET SQUIRE, MARY WOOD AND THE BTFT TRUSTEES

Western Nepal Disability Trust (WNDT)

This year we have been able to support two particular projects in Nepal, with the help of St Mary's church - collectively and through individuals - and we are very grateful for this ongoing support which is very important to us and our partner projects.

Donations received from the PCC, the Facing Outwards Group Monday coffee mornings, and the regular Sunday coffee after church have been a significant part of our income. Individuals have also made donations – including on a regular basis – and supported our Fairtrade Craft stall. Also vital is the prayer support and moral support for our partner projects and our WNDT activities.

This year we have supported the second tailoring training to be completed and organised by Light of Pokhara organisation. The vocational training was given to 15 women who are disabled or who care for a family member with disabilities. On a family visit to Nepal in November 2023, Prem and Sophie could meet with some of the trainees and their families, which was very special.

We have also supported the Community Disability Outreach project which provides practical support, treatment and equipment to disabled people and carers in very rural and isolated communities. The aim is to support and enable them to take part

in the life of their local community and be included as much as possible. Local government and organisations are also trained and developed to help this process, for longer term benefit.

On behalf of the partner projects and communities, and our Trustees, we thank St Mary's PCC and congregation for your ongoing support and contribution in any way.

JANE SCHOFIELD GURUNG FOR WNDT TRUSTEES

Katiyo School

This year has been a good time for the school as we have been able to start to building the Nursery classrooms. We have sent enough money over to put the roof on.

Next, we will need to sort out the inside of the classrooms but don't know what is needed yet. We are hoping we have sufficient funds in the bank to cover this. Now we are in sight of finishing the classrooms we now have another project. The school has been offered a lot of books providing there is somewhere to put them.

So, it looks like we need to build a classroom for a library. So, watch this space! We are really grateful for the money the church gives us. Also, we are fortunate to have the 1st Burley Brownies backing as they have done for the last 23 years. Once again Sharon is organising the Bookmark Project which has raised £28,000 over the last two years so we are hoping for a similar amount this year.

We have booked to visit the school this year in July followed by a safari in South Africa.

ANNETTE AND SHARON (ON BEHALF OF KATIYO PRIMARY SCHOOL).

Sudan

One year of war has caused immense suffering, leading to the displacement of more than 8 million people and the deaths of 15,000. Today, Sudan is teetering on the brink of collapse, 25 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, with conflict continuing to have devastating impacts on almost every aspect of day-to-day life.

Sudan is experiencing one of the worst hunger crises in the world and the likelihood of mass starvation in parts of the country is high. There are currently at least 18 million (more than 37% of the population) acutely food insecure people within the country, meaning that their lives are in danger from a lack of available, affordable food.

The total number of people internally displaced in Sudan has surpassed 9 million, making it the largest internal displacement crisis in the world. Those most affected are children, accounting for half of the displaced population and facing severe impacts on their health and education. The IRC's Regional Emergency Director in East Africa says: "The staggering statistic of 14 million children in Sudan, half of all children in the country, requiring humanitarian aid is a stark reminder of the urgent need for collective action".

Christians in Sudan have always been among the poorest and the church there plays a huge role in supporting and encouraging them. Our diocesan link with Sudan is strong and we support our Sudanese brothers and sisters both prayerfully and financially. There seems to be global indifference to the plight of people in Sudan, international efforts to resolve the crisis have been grindingly slow but Sudanese civilians have shown extraordinary strength. They have gone to extraordinary lengths to help others - collecting food, cash, and medicine to aid those in dire need. Yet despite these efforts, the humanitarian situation is still worsening. In urban areas they are running out of food and death from hunger is rising.

Whilst war affects most of the population, there are areas still outside the war zone. The Christian community in Port Sudan celebrated Christmas: "This year, the holidays came in very tough circumstances," says Elia, a youth leader. "Sudan is bleeding and we are in a state of grief. But Christmas brought a message of joy. That is why we hope, in the name of God, that we will see a different year, filled with peace and assurance."

Archbishop Ezekiel has had to leave Khartoum and has relocated in Port Sudan from where he is trying to oversee the work of the church in Sudan. He has travelled over 1,000 miles from Port Sudan to visit and encourage congregations in the north, along the Nile. More recently in March he has taken an 1,800-mile detour to reach congregations in the Nuba Mountains. At a service in Heiban he consecrated the Revd El-Sir Hassan as the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Heiban, the Rev Ludia Shokai, a Sudanese curate from Bradford travelled to Sudan to accompany Archbishop Ezekial. They visited churches in the Nuba mountains, and camps for displaced people in South Sudan giving encouragement and hope to many.

Bishop Hassan James, based in Kadugli in the Nuba Mountains, invites us to pray: "Pray for peace and stability in the country, and for peace agreements to be reached between the warring parties. Pray for displaced people, the dire humanitarian situation, and the health of children. Pray for the people of Darfur. Pray for believing men and women to remain steadfast in faith amid difficult circumstances."

Donations given for refreshments on Sunday mornings and from coffee and cake are divided between our four overseas charities and those for Sudan have been sent to the Diocese to send to Sudan for emergency relief. In view of the desperate and

worsening situation in Sudan we will be holding a special fundraising appeal please do give generously if you are able.

MARY BROOKS

Mothers' Union

At last, we felt that the pandemic was behind us and we were able to invite speakers and reach out to other people and groups. We have joined in with collecting and donating items needed for people in Manningham via Mary Brooks, and are currently sending maternity items for the Bradford Doulas, via Jenny Kimber our Bradford Area President.

We enjoyed hearing about Pat Emmel's visit to The Repair Shop, and a talk by Rachel O'Conner telling us about Burley and WWII. You can find out more from the Burley Archive at the Library. We were also introduced to Tuesday Health Walks by their leader Ann Nuttall. Phil Bishop, our new vicar accepted our invitation to visit an afternoon meeting soon after his arrival and it was a precious time of getting to know each other. Taking part in St Mary's Flower Festival was another special time.

In January 2023 we joined the continual Wave of Prayer for our linked dioceses in Uganda, S Africa and the Solomon Islands; always a profound experience as we do each year.

We are part of Mothers' Union World Wide which in 83 countries, has 4 million members and provides funding for core programmes such as Literacy & Financial Education, Loving for Life and the Parenting Programme. MU tackles issues which destabilize family life: poverty, inequality of opportunity and countless eternal pressures which undermine the value of individual and family life. Through community development, health education, through the provision of learning and through sharing of skills and knowledge we bring a range of practical solutions which bring about transformed lives and flourishing relationships.

Our main fundraiser was our popular Strawberry Tea which raised £300. This was doubled to £600 through the MU joining 'The Big Give' appeal. The money is being sent towards a focus on Mtwara in the far south of Tanzania, isolated from the more prosperous north, but where MU has been able to help set up savings groups and loan facilities. Members are then able to start small businesses and support one another for the long term.

I have recently discovered the Mothers' Union World Wide group on Facebook. Well worth the visit with photos and videos of distant groups and members which made me really feel the far reaches of the organisation we belong to. Try it!

PAM SOWMAN

Love Burley

Love Burley held its annual Christmas lunch again. Due to increasing numbers we moved venue for the first time from the URC church hall to the Scout and Guide hut.

This proved to be a fantastic event and the extra space we had (including two very busy kitchens!) made everything much easier.

As well as welcoming guides who did an amazing job serving everyone, we saw many more volunteers joining Love Burley to help with the event.

Moving forward, the trustees would ideally like more volunteers on board so that we can do more events a year. It is not possible for the trustees to organise every event as life circumstances means we have less available time, so we hope to find a volunteer events manager who will help bring older people together from our community a few times a year. Gathering people who often may struggle for company continues to be the mission of Love Burley.

Please get in touch with me if you'd like to help us in any way.

BECKY BERRY, LOVE BURLEY TRUSTEE

The Facing Outwards Group

The Facing Outward Group has continued to regularly raise funds at our Coffee and Cake Monday events for our charitable links with Tereli, Katiyo, Nepal and Sudan. The money raised is shared equally between them.

The links made with St. Philip's in Gurlington ceased within the last year as the church closed down the food bank and so our original role with funding, giving of goods and personal help given by Mary, Elaine and Becky were no longer required. Mary, however, has kept in contact with St. Paul's in Manningham.

Within our village some financial help has been forwarded to families via our links with the two First Schools when the needs have been identified. This is from generous support from some members of our congregation.

Finally, the Group would like you to know we have booked an evening talk including light refreshments to take on Friday April 26th 2024, when Sharon Hattersley will present us with an update of progress made with the school in Katiyo. Further information closer to the time will follow.

Thank you from all of us.

ELAINE MARSDEN

House Groups

There are several house groups that continued to meet regularly during 2023. The programme for each group varies but always allows us to explore our faith whether by straight forward Bible Study, watching films together or praying.

So, through our groups in a variety of ways we explore, learn, discuss, share our doubts, pray and enjoy fellowship together. If anyone would like to join a group or know more about them, please do contact me.

LIS MERRICK

Thursday House Group

The Thursday house group has continued to meet sometimes for Bible Study where we have looked at the life of the early church by studying the Acts of the Apostles, or using books such as Exploring Faith Together Through Fiction to guide and stimulate our thinking. At the moment we are looking at John's Gospel. We meet on the second and fourth Thursday afternoon from 2.00 to 3.30. If you would like to know more, or join us, do ring me on 01943 863843.

MARGARET YOUNG

Book Group

Our group has met about every 6 weeks in the past year. We have chosen a wide variety of books... all in the hope that they will further our thinking and growth in our life of faith.

We have been challenged and inspired; the value being in our discussions that have often highlighted differing opinions but lead to new understanding and new insights.

ANN HAYWOOD

Ladies' Group

The Ladies' Group has continued to meet on the first Thursday of each month between October and May, and this year we have had quite a variety of speakers and entertainments. Our speakers have included Diane from Prickly Pigs Hedgehog Rescue, a slide show of 'Postcards from the Past' which brought back memories of 1950s seaside holidays for many of us, and a talk on Clog Making with many examples of the speaker's craft to admire. In December we had an entertaining evening making our own Christmas decorations and in January we celebrated the New Year with a Bingo evening and faith supper.

We meet on the first Thursday of the month from October to May, at 7.30pm at the Parish Centre. Visitors and new members are always welcome.

LINDA NELSON

Burley Hall

There is a monthly communion service at Burley Hall which is warmly welcomed and appreciated by those who attend. Numbers vary greatly some months there have been as many as twenty while other months it has been as low as seven.

MARY BROOKS