

St Mary's Ashendon – report 2024

St Mary's church has had a good year with a nice growth in our activities.

We continue to run three services each month: Lego church, worship for both children and adults which involves building Lego models; a service of Holy Communion which is well attended (given the size of the village) and a more informal service of morning worship.

This year we re-established a Home Group, kindly hosted by Ross and Thea Gemmel. Each session started with a shared meal (baked potatoes with a variety of fillings provided by the attendees), followed by a study of six of Jesus's seven prayers. This worked well and we are continuing the Home Group into the summer with a high level view of the Bible.

We have continued our livestream broadcasts of our monthly Communion service and our major Festivals on Facebook, in addition to the weekly Zoom service of Compline held every Sunday, technically managed by Peter Johnson and Imogen Holbrook. The weekly Zoom service spans the whole benefice, with good representation from Ashendon.

The number of members of the village who support the church in one way, or another continues to be very encouraging. This ranges covers everything from keeping the church clean, tidy, and beautifully decorated with flowers through mowing the churchyard, organising, and helping run events such as the Harvest Supper and the Christmas Bazaar to the clerical work involved in administering a church. The attached list has 27 headings (which is certainly not all the activities) and contains 51 individual names, plus the WI (behind which stand yet more names). That is around 20% of the village. Our apologies to anyone we have inadvertently omitted. We are very grateful for this support and to celebrate this, we again held a service of thanksgiving for all this support ("Love your church"), which was well attended.

Our helpers at St Mary's church

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following who have helped the church flourish during the year:

For Cleaning and Flowers: Richard Bates, Vanessa Bates, Claire Burton, Suzie Crwys-Williams, Virginia de Lusignan, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Imogen Holbrook, Fiona Jacob, Liz Johnson, Kym Raybone, Richard Lewin, Sue Lewin, Margaret Lloyd, Georgina Meadows-Smith, Sian Miller, Jan Pike, Ruth Pimm, Pam Rand, Shirley Rand, Felicity Smettem, Peter Smettem, Carol Smith, and Gill Walker.

For organising the flower and church cleaning rotas: Felicity Smettem

For Ashendon Voices: Fiona Jacob, Vanessa Bates, Claire Burton, Imogen Holbrook, Mary Nash, Sue Paine, Jan Pike, Ruth Pimm, Luisa Pullin, Shirley Rand, Felicity Smettem, Jean Watson, and Belinda Watt.

For Opening and Locking the Church: Imogen Holbrook, Peter Johnson, Felicity and Peter Smettem, and Belinda Watt.

For leading the monthly Morning Worship: Peter Johnson

For reading in the services: Felicity Smettem, Belinda Watt, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, David Crwys-Williams, Sue and Chris Paine, Julian Chester, and Mark Yates.

For leading prayers: Thea & Ross Gemmell, Imogen Holbrook, Peter Johnson, Susan Rand, Belinda Watt.

For Providing the Altar poppies at Remembrance: The WI

For providing the Angel Decorations at Christmas: Carol Smith and the WI.

For organising the front Churchyard Mowing: Richard Bates

For Organising the bottom Churchyard Mowing: Paul Horwood

For Mowing the Churchyard: Julian Chester, Paul de Lusignan, Ashley Holbrook, Paul Horwood, Andy Howes, Richard Lewin, Richard Phillips, Martin Saunders, Peter Smettem, and Gill Walker.

For Hedge Cutting and Ivy Clearance: Richard Bates, Peter Johnson and Peter Smettem

For Weed Killing the Pathways: Chris Paine

For Playing the organ over Christmas: Tom Johnson

For moving the Organ into and out of the Church: Tom and James Johnson, Dan and Tom Collins (of Wotton Underwood)

For collecting the Bernwode News annual subscription and delivering the Bernwode News: Kevin and Mary Nash

For preparing for Holy Communion: Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem and Vanessa Bates.

For producing the Christingles: Felicity Smettem

For Organising and helping with the Harvest Supper: Felicity and Peter Smettem, Vanessa and Richard Bates, Sally Dorling, Imogen Holbrook, Tans Theobald, Virginia de Lusignan, Sarah Chester, Belinda Watt, Thea Gemmell, Shirley Rand, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Paul de Lusignan, and Harry Theobald

For organising the Church Bazaar: Pam and Shirley Rand

For helping with the church Bazaar: Jan Pike, Vanessa and Richard Bates, Margaret Lloyd, Belinda Watt, Shirley and Pam Rand, Carol Smith, Felicity and Peter Smettem

For Refreshments after the Services: Imogen Holbrook, Vanessa Bates and Felicity Smettem

For broadcasting the monthly communion service on Facebook: Peter Johnson

For organising and providing refreshments at Lego Church: Vanessa and Richard Bates, Belinda Watt, Felicity and Peter Smettem, Imogen Holbrook, Thea and Ross Gemmell

For Administrative duties: Kevin Nash as Treasurer, Peter Johnson as vice Chair, PCC Secretary and Gift Aid Secretary, Imogen Holbrook and Richard Bates as Churchwardens, Liz Johnson for Safeguarding, Suzie Crwys-Williams for auditing the accounts and Roger Pike for circulating service details.

For acting as Trustees: Richard Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Peter Johnson, Vanessa Bates, Julian Chester and Belinda Watt.

For organising the pop-up pub: Richard and Vanessa Bates