

St. Mary's, Acton



Annual Report 2021

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Services at St. Mary's

We hope that the pattern of Services below will reflect the regular worship in St. Mary's as we move beyond the pandemic. Please check our website or Newsletter for any changes which may need to be made.

Sundays

8.00am

A reflective start to the day with said **Holy Communion** on the **2nd** and **4th Sundays** of the month.

10.00am

Messy Church Service for **all** the family on the **3rd Sunday** of the month - songs, crafts, drama, informal study group ... and lots of toast!

11.00am

Holy Communion on the **1st Sunday** of the month.

Morning Prayer on the **2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays** of the month.

5.00pm

Contemplative Service of **BCP Evensong** on **1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays** of each month.

Wednesdays

10.30am

A Service of **Holy Communion** every Wednesday. This is followed by fellowship with tea/coffee and cakes/biscuits and a glass of sherry on special occasions.

Please check our Website or Newsletter for details of different or special Services and times of worship that take place regularly during the course of the year. For details of other activities please see our website.

Growing closer to God, each other and the community we serve.

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Vicar's Report



2021 began in yet another full-lockdown as the Covid Delta variant took hold across the country. As I look back on 2021, it is encouraging to see just how much "normality" returned during the course of the year, despite considerable uncertainty and disruption at various points in the year.

Against this background of uncertainty, I want to say thank you to all those who enabled worship, and later other activities such as Tea at the Tower to take place, especially when an avalanche of ever-changing regulations and advice had to be absorbed and put into place at short notice. It is credit to them that it was never obvious that pages of advice were typically received late on Friday evening for implementation by the coming Sunday. We all owe those involved a great deal of gratitude as they enabled us to stay safe, whilst enabling as many activities as possible to take place at the same time.

In saying "Thank you" there is always the risk of missing someone, but I must say "Thank you" on behalf of all of us to Penni Doyle as she has cheerfully acted as Churchwarden alone, and also to all those who have helped Penni to fulfil this task. Thank you, too, to Stephan Davies, Deana Emerton and the large team who ensure that Tea at the Tower was able to return in late August. It is a great achievement to be able to offer such a warm welcome to all-comers week by week and would not be possible without every person involved playing their part.

Thank you, too, to Deana Emerton, Claire Lewis-Jones, Joyce Percival, Stephan Davies and all those who enabled a successful Christmas Festival and Christmas Concert to take place safely against the challenge of Covid at the end of the year.

Further thanks are due to Tracey Foster, Janet Malbon, Miriam Harvey, Peter Foster and all those who have enabled Messy Church to re-start this year. It is credit to the communication with families, together with the provision of high quality materials throughout lockdown that the momentum on Messy Church has been maintained despite happening "at home" instead of "in-person" over so many months. Attempts to re-start Praise and Play began towards the end of the year but, despite interest from families, has yet to bear fruit.

Thank you to all those who enable worship to happen, Sunday by Sunday and at midweek. Without Peter Foster playing the organ and piano, other musicians leading our worship, people willing to read and act as sidespeople, prepare the church, and attend worship, none of the other activities so familiar to this church, would be able to happen.

One of the highlights of 2021 has been the growing links with Acton CE Primary Academy. As restrictions eased, it was a great joy to welcome every child in the school into church for the Advent Trail, and thanks are due to Joyce Percival for organising a team to enable this event over several days at the end of the Autumn term. It was also a joy to hold a number of performances of the Early Years and Key Stage One nativity, enabling small numbers of parents to attend each time. I continue to meet regularly with Head of School, Rachael McKinlay and Lesley Latronico and Philip Percival continue to support the school in their role as Governors. A number of opportunities to further strengthen links are now becoming clear as Covid restrictions continue to ease.

Another thank you is due to all of you for enabling me to take my delayed sabbatical in the Autumn, especially to those who ensured that parish life continued as usual in my absence. It was very much appreciated and enabled me to gather a great deal of data which I continue to process in my rare moments of free time. A paper was written during my sabbatical, due for publication any day now, and another is well on the way, but there is much more to be written when time allows.

I cannot finish this report by noting the loss of a number of faithful, regular worshippers during the year. The sudden death of Tony Mathie left a large and noticeable hole in the shape of our Treasurer, but each of those who have died have been loved and we feel their loss.

It is in this context that I wish to say thank you to James Hickie for his diligent work in, quite literally, picking up the role of Treasurer from scratch, with very little guidance available as he has done this. It is tribute to James that the income and expenditure of the church continued with very little disruption in a challenging situation.

Finally, and most certainly by no means least, a very big thank you to God for his continued faithfulness to us. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, none of the above ministry, and a great deal more would be possible. In a church as ancient as St. Mary's, it is possible to see God's faithfulness to this community down the centuries, and we should be equally thankful for that on-going faithfulness to us today.

S Anne Lawson, Vicar

Churchwarden's Report

Looking back on 2021, for me as a churchwarden who was appointed immediately prior the pandemic, this has been an odd period of time and although we have been closed for much of that time, it has been a more hopeful year in which St. Mary's and her congregation are beginning to return to much loved services and festivals to mark God's presence in our community. During this time new skills and ways of working were explored - although I think most of the congregation heaved a sigh of relief when we could meet once again in person for our services and not via Zoom - having said that the sight of Rev. Anne's Shadow "cat bombing" the screen was always a cheerful moment! The phone support system was a great success and appreciated by all concerned, thank you to those involved.

The Fabric report will give an update regarding the Church Building but it is worth noting that repairs identified in the Quinquennial review are being steadily addressed including ongoing repairs to the chancel roof and ridge, and the cleaning and repairs to the west window. Many thanks to Mike Houlston for the huge amount of time and effort given to taking care of our beautiful church building. Further thanks go to Sandra and her team of industrious cleaners who once again have banished cobwebs and mice droppings as they sweep and polish our historic building throughout the year.

Rev. Anne took sabbatical leave for three months in the autumn to continue her invaluable research into the Fragile Rural Church; this is a significant though unsettling analysis of the rural church's current situation and future. We were pleased to welcome her back!

In December the Rev. Canon John Malbon officially opened the newly installed glass doors to the west entrance of the church, so kindly provided by the late John Milner. The doors have been widely and favourably commented on, allowing light to pour in and inviting people into the church.

As parishioners we voted the Saxon Stones to be the most popular choice for the Chester Cathedral Pilgrim Porch project to mark the Queen's Jubilee and we look forward to seeing our image engraved within the labyrinth design.

As requested by the PCC at the meeting held in November Stephan Davies, Penni Doyle and Joyce Percival met with John Headon (Health &

Safety Officer) to discuss what measures could be taken to reduce the risk of injury regarding the Dorfold Chapel steps; with appropriate signage and a rope restricting access the matter is now satisfactorily resolved. Access to the pulpit has been made safer by the installation of a handrail.

It has been a sad year where several members of our congregation have died or been seriously ill. Visiting and the funerals were restricted because of the pandemic rules, but we hold them in our hearts and prayers.

We have had several goodbyes and hellos this year - namely goodbye to Helen Harper, our parish secretary, who resigned after long service in the role and we thank her for her time and effort over the years. We say hello to James Hickie, our newly appointed Treasurer, who has made an enthusiastic and rigorous start to the post; and a thank you to Chris Barratt for helping with the weekly counting. Many thanks also go to Deanna and Gill who meticulously counted and banked the finances during the absence of a treasurer. Many thanks also go to Janet Malbon for her past commitment to the role of Safeguarding Officer and we welcome Tom Doyle into the post.

Sue Hull has made an excellent start in establishing Forest Church - a fresh expression of worship drawing on and incorporating ancient Christian practices. We have met twice and each time has been a delightful exploration of our faith in a new context amidst a new environment; the plan is to widen the circle of Forest Church in the spring of 2023.

Peter Foster, Sue Stott and Ann Williams continue to explore the possibility of Internet and Wi-fi in the church and we thank them for their time and effort on this important project.

Links with Acton Church of England Primary Academy School continued during the lockdowns and, as churchwarden in Rev. Anne's sabbatical absence, I was honoured to be asked to deliver the opening and closing prayers for the school's zoom Remembrance service and Harvest Festival; the two services demonstrated the dedication of both the teachers and learners as they created thoughtful and spiritual performances. The Advent Trail, once again, was a success with many of the children participating with enthusiasm and delight - thank you for all those involved in organising and delivering the workshops. We hope to revive the popular After School club in the church in the future.

As a testimony to our perseverance in the face of adversity many wonderful social events and activities took place this year allowing people the much-needed opportunity to come together in fellowship. The Social Committee report will cover the year's social activities in detail but it is worth noting that the Acton Operatic Society concert and the Christmas Tree Festival were two happy events this year, and of course the ever popular and successful Tea in the Tower continues to attract a large and diverse number of people into our community. Thank you to all those involved in making St. Mary's, Acton, such a welcome and cheerful place to be.

And on that note I would like to extend a personal thank you to all those who have shown such patience, kindness and friendship in helping me with the role and responsibilities of the churchwarden in such extraordinary times.

Penni Doyle

Electoral Roll

The numbers on St. Mary's Electoral Roll, as at the end of 2021, were 122. This includes 5 additions and 7 deletions from the 2020 total of 124.

Charles Hull

PCC Secretary's Report

There were 6 meetings in 2021. The main topics of discussion were about building repairs, how our worship should look like after Covid, technology use during worship and other uses for the building. The other main topics were to discontinue the magazine and design a new website: www.stmarysacton.org

Ann Williams

St. Mary's Church, Acton
18th May 2021
7-30pm

Annual Parochial Church Meeting



Opening Prayers

1. Present

Rev. Anne Lawson AL	Penni Doyle PD	Deana Emerton DE
Clive Evans CE	Gill Evans GE	Peter Foster PF
Tracey Foster TF	Mike Houlston MH	Charles Hull CH
Sue Hull SH	Claire Lewis-Jones CLJ	Joyce Percival JP
Phillip Percival PP	Rosemary Shaw RS	Ann Williams AW
Helen Wood HW		

2. Apologies

Elizabeth Bull	Stephan Davies
Ena Furber	Sue Stott

3. Minutes of Annual Meetings 2nd April 2019

Motion to accept the minutes; Proposed DE, seconded PD. All agreed

4. Minutes of Annual Meetings 22nd October 2020

Motion to accept the minutes; proposed GE, seconded JP. All Agreed

5. Matters Arising

No matters arising

6. Report of changes in the Electoral Roll

There are 124 on the electoral roll. CH has agreed to continue as Electoral Officer.

7. Report on the Proceedings of the PCC and other activities in the parish

The annual report has been widely available, and 40 have been printed. AL thanked everyone who submitted, contributed reports and did things in 2020 and Miriam Harvey for assembling the booklet.

8. Report on Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

St. Mary's Acton PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due

regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Janet Malbon wishes to stand back from safeguarding Officer. Training is available. This is one job the incumbent cannot do.

9. Financial Statements of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2020

AL led a moments silence and prayers to remember Tony Mathie our Treasurer.

The main thing to note is the deficit. In a normal year the balance would be different. There is a general downward trend in income across all churches.

The repairs and upkeep of the building will require substantial money over the next year. English heritage is not interested because the amount is too small for them. Perhaps local MPs could be lobbied for more help.

We do apply a voluntary contribution to weddings and funeral invoices, but AL did not know how many were actually paid.

The good news is that James Hickie has agreed to become treasurer.

10. Report on the Fabric of the Church

MH reported there are some hard decisions for the PCC over the next few years regarding the fabric. The PCC will be consulted, and grants officers will be asked to look for any grants that may be available.

AL thanked MH for his hard work during the year.

PD read the churchwardens statement on the fabric of the church. "The goods, ornaments and fabric of the church is in good condition."

11. Report on the Proceedings of the Deanery Synod

SH said there was nothing to add to the Annual Report.

AL thanked DE, SH and EB for serving the past year on the Deanery Synod.

12. Elections

The deanery representatives were elected for 3 years in 2020

a) PCC members

There are 4 spaces on the PCC, 3 for 3 years and 1 for 1 year.

	Standing	Proposed	Seconded	
3 years	James Hickie JH	RS	AW	Elected
3 years	Helen Wood HW	AW	DE	Elected
3 years	Tracey Foster	GE	Kath Edwards	Elected
1 year	Peter Foster	GE	Kath Edwards	Elected

JP and PP agreed to be co-opted onto the PCC again.

13. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

AL proposed to remain with Bob Maurice as the Independent Examiner
MH proposed, PP seconded. Passed unanimously.

14. Any Other Business

a) Trees for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The national tree initiative - named the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) - aims to protect ancient woodlands and forests, as well as encouraging the planting of new trees. There are 3 million trees to apply for from the Woodland Trust. The trees will be distributed on a first come first served basis.

PP proposed we should apply; SH will fill in the paperwork

AL thanked everyone especially CH for his work this year.

Meeting Closed

Fabric

Since the last report progress has been made with essential maintenance including re-pointing of large areas of stonework and repairing and re-fixing the parapet on the north side of the chancel roof. The cracked stonework of the Mainwaring monument has been repaired with epoxy resin and is now secure. The sundial in the churchyard has also been repaired.

Improvements have been made in the church with the installation of glass doors inside the west door, replacing the former wood and wire mesh. A hand rail has been added to the pulpit steps as a safety measure.

Michael Houlston

Churchyard

The churchyard continues to be used and appreciated by many parishioners and bereaved, there have been 11 new graves commissioned in 2021, the largest number of new graves for many years.

Dave Whitmarsh has continued to keep the Church grounds and graveyard looking neat and tidy, trimming hedges, mowing grass and brushing up leaves. Scott has continued to paint and look after metal work and gates. Mr. Brookfield has kindly cleaned and powder coat painted the lyche gates and has now taken away the main south gates for the same treatment, they should not need touching again for a generation.

No new machinery or capital spending has been required this year.

At last the Diocese has agreed to a plaque for the Lyon gift, this will be made and installed.

We are looking at planting some trees to mark the Queen's Jubilee in the gaps in the graveyard extension hedge, this will hopefully fit in with tree planting in the village.

Philip Percival

Deanery Synod

Highlights from the Deanery Synod meetings held in 2021 are as follows:

23rd February 2021 - Zoom Meeting

Many church members have enjoyed being together for on-line services. Phone worship has also gone well. Discussion took place on the many interactive technological services available.

New clergy, Rev. Catherine Cleghorn, new incumbent for Leighton-cum-Minshull Vernon & Warmingham and Rev. Oliver Iqwe new incumbent for St. Andrew's, were warmly welcomed.

17th June 2021 at St. Mary's Nantwich

The meeting took the form of Evening Prayer on the theme of "Encouragement" and was led by Rev. Alison Fulford.

8th November 2021 at St. Chad's Wybunbury

Julie Withers gave a talk on Pastoral Principles for living well together. These Principles were developed to encourage better inclusion of the LGBT community and also can be applied to other differences within our church communities.

We were split into small groups for a discussion time.

Sue Hull

Churches Together In Nantwich

The six Church groups from in and around Nantwich only met once during 2021, finding it difficult to plan events together but supportive of the Covid restrictions each Church was facing. *Joyce Percival*

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Safeguarding Officer: Thomas M. Doyle (Tom Doyle)

Please see below the various requirements for Safeguarding; Best Practice

The Safeguarding Officer should know (& does)

- The current law and guidance of safeguarding practice for children and young people.
- The common types of abuse you may come across and the signs you should look for to recognize abuse.
- How to build a safe space for children and young people so that they feel safe, looked after, and willing to share any concerns they may have with you.
- How to recruit new staff members in a safe way and prevent future safeguarding issues.
- Excellent listening and empathy skills so you can properly listen to and support anyone who comes to you with a concern.
- Exploring the barriers to disclosure and the recognition of any safeguarding concerns.

It's important to recognize that the role of a Safeguarding Officer is constantly changing, and it's vital to keep up to date with the latest developments in safeguarding rules and regulations.

As of 20th April 2022 any safeguarding issues/matters have been directed &/or reported to the appropriate person/persons or managing body related to St. Mary's Church, Acton (Diocese of Chester).

As well as attending safeguarding training, it is my responsibility as the Safeguarding Officer to ensure everyone in our organisation is up to date on the latest safeguarding information and are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.

It is also my responsibility to recommend the different training sessions that everyone needs to attend and why each training session is vital to their job. The Safeguarding Officer will also be in charge of keeping abreast of any changes in law or regulations to ensure that our community has the knowledge and is updated as soon as possible.

The responsibilities as a Safeguarding Officer:

- Understand the importance of promoting children's rights, safety, and wellbeing within your organisation.
- A look at the laws and guidance surrounding safeguarding which you will need to follow as a Safeguarding Officer.
- A deeper look at child abuse and child sexual exploitation so you can recognise the signs that there may be a safeguarding issues which needs addressing.
- Understand how to respond to safeguarding issues which are brought to your attention.
- How to properly report on safeguarding issues to ensure you follow the policies and procedures of your organisation.
- Look at how to recognise safeguarding risks and identify children at risk.
- Learn how to carry out safeguarding risk assessments.
- Learn about advising others on child protection issues.
- Understand what you need to do after a referral to ensure safeguarding issues are dealt with properly.
- A look at record keeping and how to ensure your records are accurate and secure.
- Understand how to write safeguarding reports in a non-judgmental way.
- Discover how to write care plans and arrange proper support for vulnerable children.
- Understand how to stay calm in stressful situations.
- Look at providing evidence in court if necessary.

Thank you for your continued support and involvement.

Thomas M. Doyle (Tom Doyle)

Acton C of E Primary Academy

To develop the learners of tomorrow and equip them with the skills to flourish and succeed for "nothing is impossible with God" Luke 1:37

I asked Rachael, the head of school at Acton to give me a quote about this school year and she said *"Acton have continued to show true resilience and determination over another turbulent term of Covid complications. Being able to open up more has enabled us to enjoy wonderful events such as the spring fair and residential. We are so pleased we can visit the church as a community once again."*



The children's last visit to St. Mary's was for their Mothering Sunday Service on 23rd March. Their service was beautiful and it was lovely to see them all at church with a very supportive audience of parents, grandparents and friends. They are looking forward to being back at church for their Easter service on 21st April.



On 1st September 2021 Acton School joined NWAT (North West Academies Trust) and RLLAT (Real Life Learning Academy Trust) ceased to exist. NWAT now assumes all responsibility for both Acton and Calveley under the executive leadership of Steve Docking, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and local governing boards at each school.

NWAT is a very strong, effective and established Trust.

There has been a lot of building work taking place in school due to a very bad leak! It's the Year 1 classroom that has been completely revamped. Children are so excited and pleased with the completed classroom; they love that they have new lockers and lovely new furniture. There is also a new roof over the hall and Yrs 3&4 classrooms.

There are presently 171 children on role and 26 staff in total:

Reception - 21 children Year 3 - 18 children Year 5 - 30 children
Year 1 - 30 children Year 4 - 25 children Year 6 - 27 children
Year 2 - 20 children

Our governing body meetings have mainly been Zoom sessions for a couple of years so I'm really looking forward to seeing lots of happy, smiling faces in school once again.

Lesley Latronico

Acton After-School Club

Due to the pandemic and strict ruling for school groups the After School Club never came to the Church for their monthly visit. We look forward to welcoming them back in the Summer Term of 2022.

Bell Ringers

Hello again Report time is here and what another disrupted year it's been!!!

There have been changes this year in the belfry with three regular ringers now unable to ring leaving us in short supply. We still have ringers coming from Nantwich and Shavington to ring the bells when numbers will allow for Sunday morning service.

Practice night on a Tuesday, 8-9pm, has now resumed and we have 3 local parishioners learning to ring with instruction from David Allman which is much appreciated. Ringers from Nantwich and Wrenbury come to help which is very welcome.

If there is anyone else interested in learning to ring or just coming to see us ring please feel free to join us on a Tuesday evening.

Weddings have now resumed and again we are helped out by ringers from Nantwich and Wrenbury for which we are extremely grateful.

The Christmas tree festival resumed and we again enjoyed decorating our tree, it was lovely to see so many trees again in church.

We were pleased to welcome visiting bell ringers in late February from Pickering who were pleased to be able to ring after not being able to tour for a couple of years, hopefully more will follow later in the year.

David Allman is still keeping the clock running in excellent order and maintaining it for the people of Acton.

Once again many thanks to the PCC for payment of the bellringers subscriptions.

I hope that things can improve in the belfry in the not too distant future and that the bells will be ringing out in Acton on a more regular basis.

Carole Sturgess

Bible Readers

I say this every year!! Generally, the system we have works well. This, of course, is thanks to the people who are committed and who read so well. I am indebted to my list of readers, who mostly read at the morning services, but I seem to be asking the same people over and over to read for these services. I hope they don't mind too much. Readers for the evening services are few and far between, unfortunately.

If anyone has any new names to suggest to me, please let me have them (+ phone numbers) and I shall be pleased to get in touch. I would especially like to recruit some young readers. If any of you have any youngsters in your family, who would be prepared to read or you think would do so with a bit of encouragement, it would be good to hear from you. I am happy to show them the ropes and put them at their ease.

The Readers' list is always at the back of the Church and I try to encourage people to put their names down fairly well in advance. I also try to share readings around for special services.

May I take this opportunity to say a very big "thank you" to all involved. I feel privileged to have worked with them for many years and am, and have been, extremely grateful for their support throughout this time.

Ena Furber

Bible Study Group

Like many organisations, both church and secular, our Bible Study meetings had to be cancelled during the pandemic. However, we were able to keep in touch during the lockdown by sending weekly e-mails to our Bible Study members and other interested people from our church, and we hope that they were enjoyable.

After many enquiries from our regular members, we are very pleased to report that on 28th April 2022 we will once again be meeting at the home of Deana and Gerald Emerton to commence our short series of Bible Studies. This time we will be looking at the Acts of the Apostles and learning how the early church put into practice their new-found faith - an exciting time.

Later in the year we will have another session so please look out for more information. Everyone is welcome to come and join in the informal meetings when no view is prohibited and every question of value.

John & Janet Malbon

Church Cleaning

Lockdown due to Covid was not "a friend of Church Cleaning". Although the church may have appeared as clean as usual, much cleaning was unable to be done. However we are now slowly getting back to normal, and cleaning and polishing as thoroughly as we can.

Unfortunately due to Covid, we were unable to have our usual Christmas party - in fact two were missed. This year we are having a summer party instead, hopefully in July.

There are still two teams of ladies cleaning the church, and there are still 24 of us. There have been some changes. Maggie Harper retired for health reasons and Wendy Coxhill recently left Acton to be nearer her family in the South East, both after many years of service. However, Brenda Wilson and Vivienne Turner have joined the Tuesday team and are very welcome additions. Jennifer Bolton, Elizabeth Bull, Julie Cope, Chris Cundall, Jan Dobson, Penni Doyle, Kath Edwards, Gill Evans, Liz Ford, Tracy Foster, Ena Furber, Angela Gray, Sue Hull, Leslie Latronico, Janet Malbon, Ann McMillan, Judith Merrin, Sarah Potts, Mary Rees, Helen Wood and Jill Wright are still stalwart cleaners. Many have been helping for many, many years and I'm still discovering hidden talents!

They all do a wonderful job and I would like to thank them for all their help and support. It's not always easy cleaning an ancient sandstone church, but hopefully our efforts are appreciated. In a good month, with full attendance, we can clock up over seventy hours of cleaning! We hope the church is a warm and welcoming place helped by our labours.

Sandra Houlston

Flower Guild

Throughout the year flowers have been placed on the main altar, except during Advent and Lent. To abide by the COVID rules artificial silk flowers have been used when necessary. These flowers were paid for by donations and we thank the donors for their generosity.



At Easter during Lockdown, we took the Church to the people by building a tomb and garden at the east end of the church. The graveyard was filled with butterflies and we had them flying up the wall on either side of the east window. Three crosses were put up against the rail tomb facing Chester Road.



At Harvest we had displays of produce inside and outside of the church building.

Similarly, at Armistice we had displays of poppies inside and outside of the church building.

At Christmas the inside of the church was decorated with around thirty Christmas trees. These trees were sponsored by businesses and individuals who decorated the trees with the theme of Christmas music. At the east end of the church a crib was built with Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, with the Shepherds and the Three Kings nearby in the churchyard. The Alms-houses were lit with coloured lights as were many of the trees in the churchyard. Bringing the whole together was a sea of white stars. Unfortunately, on Boxing Day night some unknown individuals vandalised the crib and scattered the remains down Monks'



Lane, but the damage was quickly repaired. This was a sad interlude to a joyous festival.

The following people should be thanked for helping to create both the Christmas and Easter scenes (sponsored by Emerton Roofing), also Armistice and Harvest which were much appreciated by many people who passed by, giving a presence of the church into the community: Will & Ellie Emerton, Andrew & James Emerton, Claire Lewis-Jones, Sue & James Stott, Mike Houlston, Charles Hull, Philip & Joyce Percival, Jill Evans and Ena Furber. Thanks must also be extended to those who helped in taking the displays apart.

Deana J Emerton

Kingsbourne Housing Estate Visiting

Once again the visiting of the new houses on the Kingsbourne Estate was hit by the pandemic when we were not allowed to visit any family and friends, let alone strangers, to welcome them into their new homes and give out invitations to services and other events held at their parish church.

The pandemic has not dimmed the sale of the homes as they continued to be built and the extent of the housing is now widespread. We have yet to decide when and how we can resume delivery of our welcome packs - minus the magazine of course. If anyone has any view or offers of help, please let us know.

John & Janet Malbon

Messy Church



Messy Church @ Home started its second year with a bumper edition of activities for Holy Week but to keep some "face-to-face" contact, brightly coloured bags made by Janet and filled with chocolate and craft activities were delivered to our MC families for Easter.

We thought about Jesus the Good Shepherd in April and in May and were encouraged to think about how we can care for God's creation and especially the need for water. An e-envelope set up raised over £250 for Christian Aid.

June was Father's Day so we looked at the story of the prodigal son - cue piggy things to make and do and in July we read the story of Zacchaeus to remind us to say sorry and learn how to put things right.

August and we were back in Church for our Messy Olympics. With individually bagged food crafts, small tables and lots of fresh air we managed to have the MC we know and love (no toast yet though)! Harvest in September, all about the Bible in October and in November we celebrated Christ the King and made sparkling crowns for our Christmas festival display.

The Messy Nativity went with a BOOM! as we discovered the impossible things God made happen when Jesus was born. The Christingle in January was a bit more subdued with fewer there than usual. It was a fitting end to a stormy week in February when we filled Noah's Ark (complete with animal sound effects) and made rainbows of various sorts to remember God's promises. In March Jesus came to the rescue at the wedding in Cana and gifts were made for Mothering Sunday. We sowed sunflower seeds for the Sustainable Nantwich challenge to be planted in the churchyard.

The number attending Messy Church has fluctuated this year as there is no doubt that Covid has not yet relinquished its grip on us. As we look forward to Easter we wish all our families good health and good times together.

Family and work commitments have meant that Cathy Tripp has been unable to take on a regular role although she can be counted on to prompt the projector whenever she is with us! Rachel Percival's family moved to Shropshire and we thank Becky Edwards for her contribution last year and look forward to seeing her again when work commitments allow. We especially thank our older congregation who faithfully support us at this service and who willingly join in with whatever we ask of them! We know that they appreciate the discussion group as well.

Tracey Foster, Janet Malbon, Miriam Harvey, Peter Foster

Music



Music for Church services is mostly played on the organ, a late Victorian instrument with strong bellows and mechanical action, looked after by our organ tuner Jim Molyneux of Blythe Bridge who visits 3 times a year.

There is also an upright piano for smaller services and for the worship songs for Messy Church. Thanks go to Miriam for her cornet playing for these lively sessions.

An instrument group has been formed after the Covid-enforced lull, with no particularly aim at the moment other than encouragement, fun and getting together (outside when weather permits!). Thanks to Hilary, Wendy, Miriam, Jonathan and John for rising to the challenge.

Jess Thayer has kindly helped with her beautiful solos at festival services as her work commitments allow. We are also grateful to Acton Operatic Society for staging concerts for the essential fundraising for our Church.

If anyone is interested in playing an instrument or singing please do contact Peter Foster (01270 626802). We'd be very pleased to hear from you.

Peter Foster

Sidespeople

The names of those who served on the Sidespersons' Rota in 2021 are listed below. Each and every one of you is thanked for the splendid service that you have given to St. Mary's throughout the years, always giving a warm welcome to those attending our Services.

Since February 2020 normal services no longer took place in the church and distancing and safety rules have been in force for all services during 2021. This has resulted in different responsibilities for the Sidespersons and thanks are given to all those who participated during this difficult period.

Our church has a fine reputation for being a friendly one and the job you all do forms a major part of this. Thank you all and keep up the good work!

Our current Sidespeople are:

Chris & Christine Barratt
Kitty Boot
Elizabeth Bull
Charles Cannon
Pam Chadderton-Poole
Joan Darlington
Robert Darlington
Stephan Davies
Kath Edwards
Poppy Emery
Gill Evans
Peter & Tracey Foster
Ena Furber

Miriam Harvey
Sheila Healy
Mike & Sandra Houlston
Charles & Susan Hull
Stephen & Linda Jones
Peter & Lesley Latronico
Lewis-Jones Family
Mary McMath
June Moss
Philip & Joyce Percival
Ricky & Charles Roundell
Fred West

Charles Hull

Praise & Play



Praise and Play hasn't attracted anyone this year due indirectly to Covid, to other health issues and to work commitments. We continue to engage with baptism families and hope that circumstances will change and allow them to come and enjoy a chat and a cup of tea, as important as the simple Bible message and songs we share with the babies and children.

Thanks to Jackie to faithfully turning up to help every other Wednesday (we have had some good discussions though!) *Tracey and Janet*

Social Committee

The year began with a further lockdown due to the pandemic and although we did not meet or worship in the Church building for many weeks I hope that we as a Church were seen to cope with the pandemic in a Christian way.

I know many of us had a list of people who we regularly rung, shopped for or met their needs. In 2021 we certainly have learned to reach out in new ways and with extra acts of kindness.

The VE day celebration afternoon teas delivered to those alone in June 20, were so well received we followed up by providing Primroses for all the school children's mothers and teachers on Mothering Sunday and "Hugs in Mugs" to isolated and housebound members of the Church last Easter.

We did go to Llandudno, but this event was not well supported, was it the pandemic or has it run its time?

Tea at the Tower started again at the end of August 2021 and continues to prove its popularity and the service it gives to the community.

This year we were able to celebrate Harvest in a more traditional way and the Songs of Praise service which involved the farming community was well received and supported.

Again at Remembrance, the Poppy display and our new "tommy" soldier added to this special day.

Two table top stalls at the Civic Hall have helped clear our store and raise funds for the Church and support other local charities.

The Ladies Lunches started again in the summer with three garden meetings, one in my garden, one at Deana's and one in Wettenhall. We were then able to meet in the Farmers Arms and The Barbridge and at Christmas at Cheerbrook Farm Shop.

The two day Christmas Festival this year was a great success again, despite all the Covid rules, risk assessments and general hesitation to commit. Faithfully we made all the arrangements, and abided by all the rules, and the results were a beautiful church decorated with Christmas trees, twinkling lights, lovely music and a great atmosphere for all the visitors. Everyone played their part, too many to thank here. The Concert given by Acton Operatic was quickly sold out due to a restricted amount of tickets, but still a special evening. The Christmas walk was very popular and brought even more people into Church at the end of their walk.

The next day the Acton School Children had their Advent Trail through the Church, probably due to fatigue after the Festival, it was not well facilitated by the Church but the children had a wonderful time, heard again the Christmas message and did memorable activities at each point of the Trail. The feedback from the school staff was very favourable too.

As with all things, 2021 will be memorable for very different reasons. I think we have done well in maintaining a loving friendly supportive Church.

Joyce Percival

Sunday Morning Refreshments

Refreshments following the 11 o'clock service made a welcome return in September last year. At first we were serving hot drinks and biscuits to people remaining seated in the pews in order to reduce close contact and, hopefully, minimize risks around covid. Recently, I'm very pleased to say, we have returned to everyone coming to collect them from under the tower which is easier and much more sociable, fellowship being a very important part of enjoying refreshments together.

Messy Church has also returned to the provision of hot buttered toast, as popular as ever and still difficult to judge timing and quantity!

There are a few vacancies on the refreshments rota due to several people not able to continue, so if you would like to help out please get your name down quickly to avoid disappointment. It really is good fun.

Kath Edwards

Tea at the Tower



The Covid pandemic lockdown led to Tea at the Tower closing its doors for the best part of 18 months. As the restrictions were lifted, we were thrilled to be opening our doors once again on 29th August 2021. Naturally, we put in place special measures to keep our visitors safe. Indeed, our visitors have frequently praised our team for the care we have shown for their wellbeing.

Our volunteers and visitors have gone out of their way to tell us how delighted they are to be back! Attendance records have been high; Yes, most Sundays, we are flat out with our tea pots, cakes and serving trays. Our monthly walks have continued to be extremely popular with attendance records peaking at 140 one Sunday afternoon! It is lovely to see people forming new friendships; we have received telephone calls subsequently, from grateful visitors telling us how much their visit has meant. Indeed, one visitor stated, "I'm not a church goer by any means ... yet oddly, I now seem to be a regular!"

The pandemic has challenged our community: physically, psychologically and socially. Tea at the Tower appears to have provided a platform for people to come together in a safe environment and show care towards one another - a compassionate community, indeed. We remember with love, our Tea at the Tower friends who have died during the pandemic months.

We are grateful for the support and enthusiasm our visitors have shown. We are particularly, grateful to our team of volunteers who form the bedrock of the Tea at the Tower rota - each volunteer, a bright shining jewel in the crown of Acton Church.

We are delighted to report that donations between our re-opening on 29th August 2021 and 13th March 2022 have amounted to £6,656.

Looking forward, we are very pleased to be welcoming Bishop Sam - who will be popping in for an informal cuppa and some cake on Sunday afternoon, 12th June 2022.

Stephan & Deana

Website

St. Mary's Acton put together a small group to redesign the website. Thanks to David Williams who constructed the site and all the other contributors that helped with content, and design.

If anyone would like to contribute anything onto the website, or have reports, notices or events publicised please send them to church@stmarysacton.org

Ann Williams