Parish of Harpenden

The History of St Mary's

A History of The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Kinsbourne Green

The story of St Mary's is the story of a small country church and the way in which it has continued for the greater part of a century and a half to meet the needs of the community it serves.

The original early Victorian building, as the architectural style bears witness, still forms a large part of the present day Church. It was purpose built in 1869 as a combined church and school on a site given by the then Lord of the Manor of Annables, the Reverend William Smyth. A few years earlier in 1865, Canon Vaughan, the first Rector of Harpenden, had arranged for meetings and children's classes to be held in the kitchen of Mrs Grips who lived in a house facing the Green. When the Church-cum-school was completed, the first school mistress was a Miss Freeman. A separate classroom for infants was added to the original building in 1892. When St Mary's was rebuilt in 1968, this classroom was incorporated in the present Church Hall.

From the outset, St Mary's stepped straightaway into its role of serving the community around it. With their own National School in the new Church building, 72 local Kinsbourne Green children were spared the need to travel daily to and from the centre of Harpenden to get an education at the National School which was founded in 1858 on a site which later became St Nicholas' Church of England Primary School. The creation of a Chapel of Ease, as St Mary's was designated, was no less appreciated by their elders. 'Chapel of Ease' has a most appealing sound, and its role can scarcely be better defined than in Brewer's dictionary where it is described as; "a place of worship for the use of parishioners residing at a distance from the Parish Church".

An early edition of the Harpenden Parish Magazine shows that at the outset. St Mary's was formally described as 'St Mary's Mission Church', Kinsbourne Green.

At that time, the pattern of worship was:

The Holy Eucharist	4th Sunday at 9.00am
Sunday Evensong	6.30pm
Holy Baptism and Children's Service	2nd Sunday at 3.00pm

Clergy were not always available and services were often taken by Lay Readers.

During the week, when the building served as a school, church furnishings were stored behind a curtain in the chancel. It was no small task each weekend to change over from school to church and back again, and the building continued in its dual role until Roundwood Park Schools were opened in 1955. Thus for 86 years the church at Kinsbourne Green had fulfilled the dual role for which it was originally built. But times were changing.

With the disappearance of its educational role, the Parish of St Nicholas acquired the school element of the Kinsbourne Green building from the Diocesan education authorities. This opened the way for the building to be developed exclusively as a church in readiness for the post-war population growth in Harpenden, which, even then, was beginning to become apparent.

During the Second World War (1939-1945) there had been no new-house building in Harpenden; and continuing materials shortages and the austerity years of the immediate post-war period restricted house building for several more years. By the latter half of the 1950's however, new houses had started increasingly to appear in Harpenden. The area of north Harpenden and Kinsbourne Green was no exception. The population increases which this foreshadowed presented a substantial challenge to the Parish of St Nicholas as a whole.

The Rector of St Nicholas at that time was the Rev'd Peter Bradshaw (1957-1964). It was under his clear-sighted guidance that it came to be recognised that the organisation of St Nicholas' Parish needed to be reviewed and modernised. He it was who first introduced the concept of dividing the Parish into three Districts, to be centred respectively on St Nicholas' Church, All Saints' Church, Batford, and the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Kinsbourne Green. St Nicholas' of course remained as the Parish Church, but All Saints' and St Mary's were designated as District Churches and each was to have a recognised Priest-in-Charge. All three Districts were to have a Church Committee which, while subordinate to the main P.C.C. and responsible to the Rector, would each operate as a 'mini' P.C.C and be responsible for much of the day-to-day running of District matters.

To emphasise the concept of separate Districts each was allocated a colour. Thus All Saints' District (defined at that time as being that part of Harpenden lying to the east of the Great Northern railway line which ran through Harpenden East Station) became the Green District. St Mary's District (defined as that part of Harpenden lying to the north of the now defunct Nicky Line which formerly had run from Harpenden Station via Roundwood Park Halt to Redbourn East, thence to Hemel Hempstead and beyond) was designated as the Blue District. It is of interest to note that it is largely for this reason that blue has figured so much in the colour scheme at St Mary's. The whole of the remainder of Harpenden (excluding those parts which were included in the Parish of St John's) made up St Nicholas' District and was given the colour Red. Within each District a system of Area Representatives was introduced whose function, co-ordinated by Sector Leaders, was to keep the Parish Office aware of any matters at street level which could be of pastoral

concern to members of the clergy team. The soundness of many of the organisational measures introduced during Peter Bradshaw's incumbency is borne out by the fact that they are still in use.

On 1st October 1958, the Rector appointed Rev'd The Honourable John Edmundson as the first Priest-in-Charge at St Mary's, Kinsbourne Green. Shortly after his appointment, John's father died and he succeeded to the title to become the second Baron, Lord John Sandford. Within the Parish, and particularly within St Mary's District, he and his wife were, with great affection, known as John and Catherine and together they led St Mary's into a new era in its history.

Before it was made into a District Church with its own Priest-in-Charge, St Mary's was run and staffed from St Nicholas' To assist the Parish Churchwardens, two Deputy Churchwardens were appointed for St Mary's in 1953; they were Mrs S.E. Catton and Mrs E.M. Cunningham. Their role was two-fold: to act as the eyes and ears of the Parish Churchwardens, and to be responsible for the provision and maintenance of the vestments, altar linen, hassocks etc. Under the 'Bradshaw' proposals, however, greater responsibility was devolved to District Committees, not only for the maintenance of church fabric but also for planning and developing the role of the Church within the District. To meet these wider responsibilities, John Sandford assembled a new-style District Committee. For the duration of his incumbency as Priest-in- Charge, Mrs Catton and Mrs Cunningham remained as Deputy Churchwardens with special responsibility for the care and maintenance of altar linen and vestments. In 1963, John Sandford left the Parish of St Nicholas and was replaced by the Rev'd Peter Nott, who eventually became Bishop of Norwich. At that point, after 10 years in office, the two Deputy Churchwardens stood down. Peter Nott, in order to bring the organisation of St Mary's District into line with that of All Saints' and St Nicholas', appointed two District Wardens These were Lt. Col. Victor Band and Mr Ronald Bradbury.

Until John Sandford was ordained Priest in 1960 the former pattern of worship did not change greatly. Following his priesting however, a regular Holy Eucharist was introduced each Sunday at 8.45am. The congregation of St Mary's began slowly to increase in size as worshippers took advantage of the regular Communion service and new-comers started to appear from the first post-war wave of housing development within the District. This growth in the size of the congregation highlighted many of the limitations of the Victorian building. A major improvement had been the installation of electric lighting in place of gas lighting in time for Easter 1959, although space-heating continued to be provided by gas for a further five years. A large radiant gas fire which was affixed to the first roof truss standing clear of the chancel arch was the sole means of space heating. (The residual piping associated with this fire can still be seen.) There was no form of automatic control of this fire and as it was turned on for only a short while before the beginning of a service, the Church for most of each winter was cold and uninviting.

It was not until 1964 that electric space heating was provided by night-storage heaters and radiant wall heaters. In the late 1980s the night-storage heaters were replaced by two powerful, automatically controlled gas radiators' one in the main body of the Church and one in the hall. Another major improvement in the late 1950s was the redecoration of the chancel by a then up-and-coming artist called Gordon Beningfield.

Gordon Beningfield

He was born in London in 1936, the son of a Thames lighterman. To escape the heavy bombing of London, particularly in the Docklands area, during World War II, the family moved to London Colney close to St Albans. The teacher at the local village school he attended recognised that the boy had an exceptional talent as an artist and gave him every encouragement.

On leaving school at 15 years of age, he was apprenticed as an ecclesiastical artist in St Albans where his aptitude to work on stained and engraved glass, carving, gold leaf, watercolour and oils was further developed. His father meanwhile had become a gardener and odd job man and worked at a number of houses on Kinsbourne Green.

As a result Gordon knew the area well. When he married in 1958 housing was still in short supply and he and his wife lived for a while in a cottage owned by Mrs E.M. Cunningham. Gordon Beningfield later in his life achieved a national reputation as a doughty defender of the English countryside and became one of Britain's most talented wildlife and countryside artists He died in 1998 at the comparatively young age of 62.

St Mary's Kinsbourne Green is fortunate indeed to have in its chancel decoration and in the lozenges which hang on each side of the Chancel arch, such lovely examples of his work as an ecclesiastical artist.

No account of the development of St Mary's would however be complete without the story of the Close site.

The Close Site

The Cattons for many years had been a well-established family in North Harpenden where they were builders and farmers. Over very many years it had been their practice to release some of the land they farmed for housing development by their own building firm. In the 1930s Cattons had built much of Roundwood Park, The Pleasance and The Close. The family had a close connection with St Mary's Church. When the Close was built, Mr Jesse Catton (whose widow Mrs S.E. Catton was to become Deputy Churchwarden in 1953) bequeathed the unbuilt central area within the Close as a site for a new St Mary's Church. This generous pre-war bequest and how it might best be used for the benefit of St Mary's and the Parish as a whole was to become a major issue in the councils of Parish administration for several years.

The older members of the St Mary's congregation who had worshipped there before and during the War had long cherished the hope of one day seeing a new St Mary's Church on the Close site. But the very uncertainty of the timescale for the realisation of this hope posed a big question in the thinking of the recently appointed District Committee. How far was it prudent to spend money on up-dating and making the old Church more suitable for worship in the short-term, if it were destined sooner or later to be replaced by a new Church? While this was a problem for St Mary's, an even greater and more urgent one faced the PCC and the parish as a whole.

At All Saints, the expanding congregation had for some time filled to overflowing the small original corrugated iron mission Church in Coldharbour Lane. The accommodation situation was dire in the extreme. A site at Pickford Bridge had been bequeathed for the building of a new All Saints Church. Thus although sites for new Churches were available in both the St Mary's and All Saints Districts, in neither case did the parish of St Nicholas have the money to proceed. It is important to remember that at that time the parish had not adopted the principles of Christian Stewardship, and as a consequence lacked the ability to plan ahead with confidence on major capital developments.

Stated simply, the problem for the parish was that as a matter of extreme urgency something needed to be done to ease the intolerable overcrowding of the congregation in the old All Saints Church on the Coldharbour Lane site. At St Mary's, on the other hand, the Church building, although needing a lot doing to it, was capable for the time being of containing the numbers of its congregation. Moreover, its site on the edge of Kinsbourne Green Common was greatly liked by many people and was large enough to allow extension of the original Victorian building. Perhaps it was the increasing numbers of newcomers to the District who had joined the worshipping community at St Mary's but there was evidence that the long-standing assumption that the future for St Mary's lay with a brand new Church on the Close site was beginning to be questioned.

It was being mooted that if the congregational needs of St Mary's District could be satisfactorily met for the foreseeable future by extending the Victorian Church building on its existing site, it would then be open to sell the Close site and use the money thereby released to build a new All Saints Church on the Pickford Bridge site. Thereafter, as soon as parish financial resources would allow the extension of St Mary's would become the next major capital project for the Parish.

The PCC accepted that proposals along these lines offered a possible way forward. The District Committees of .All Saints and St Mary's were asked to give them more detailed consideration. St Mary's District Committee identified four things needing special attention.

1. to make the best possible estimate of the number of worshipping Anglicans likely to be living in the District when Local Authority plans for housing development in North Harpenden were completed;

2. to confirm that the existing site on the edge of the common was capable of accommodating a Church large enough to meet the needs of such a number;
3. to ensure that land on the common could be made available to provide adequate car parking space;
4. if the sale of the Close site were to emerge as the preferred course of action, to ensure that everyone concerned (particularly the older residents in the Kinsbourne Green area) was made fully aware of the reasons for it.

Under John Sandford's energetic leadership the St Mary's District Committee set to work. Plans were obtained from the Harpenden Urban District Council (which at that time had not been taken over by St Albans District Council) of zones in North Harpenden earmarked for housing, with details of expected housing densities. The Lord of the Manor of Annables (Mr. Sandy Blair) agreed that land on the common immediately adjacent to St Mary's could be made available for car parking space. A number of ways in which the existing Church building might be extended were considered with advice from Mr Pat Wilson, the Parish Architect.

Soundings were then taken within the worshipping community. There was, understandably, disappointment among some, particularly the older residents, that their dream of a new Church on the Close site was unlikely to be realised. The majority view however was in favour of extending the Church building on the existing site.

The conclusion reached by the District Committee was that it would be practicable, on the existing site, to design an extension to the Church which would make it large enough to meet the needs of worshippers in the St Mary's District for the foreseeable future.

The Parochial Church Council accepted the findings of the District Committee. The Close site was sold for housing development. The proceeds of the sale enabled the Parish to go ahead with the building of a new All Saints Church on the Pickford Bridge site. This was completed in 1965.

While all the issues discussed in the foregoing paragraphs were going ahead, the corporate and worshipping life at St Mary's was developing. John and Catherine Sanford occupied a commodious house with a large garden in Roundwood Park. This, they freely made available for many Church activities. This greatly eased the limitations imposed by the original Church building which was sparsely furnished and was cold during the winter months.

Catherine Sanford started a Young Wives Group which proved very popular with younger women among the increasing number of newcomers to the District. It was during this period that in World Refugee Year, the Young Wives sponsored a visit by two young refugee girls from a camp in Austria. This led to a link between St Mary's and the Raidi family which has been written up separately in the Story of the Raidi Christmas crib.

Breakfasts at Church were introduced after Communion on Sundays. Many of the older members of the congregation in the early 1960's still clung to the old tradition that one should not eat breakfast before taking Communion. This meant that there was a keen welcome for something appetising after the service. The enthusiasm of those who took it in turns to prepare breakfast was strong enough to overcome the inadequacies of the dark little room which contained a very old gas stove and a sink with a single cold tap. (This location was referred to as – "the black hole of Calcutta"). For all the insufficiencies, week by week, hot bacon sandwiches and hot sausage rolls were produced and rushed across an intervening patch of scrubby grass for delivery at the side door of the, then, schoolroom annexe.

A Church Fellowship was started leading to coach outings to places of interest. A Youth Club was started which was known as the "Blue Ladder". In accordance with the Parish colour scheme, the Youth Clubs at St Nicholas and All Saints were known respectively as the Red Ladder and the Green Ladder. As no accommodation was available at the Church, the Blue Ladder was fortunate in having access to a hall owned by the parish which at that time occupied a site on the Luton Road at the bottom of Bloomfield Road. Later the hall and site were sold to be replaced by the block of flats known at St Nicholas Court.

Thus, by the time John Sandford ceased to be Priest-in-Charge in September 1963, there was a growing and well-established church community centred around St Mary's Kinsbourne Green. John Sandford was followed briefly as Priest-in-Charge by the Reverend Peter Nott, who was in turn succeeded in 1964 by the Reverend Hilary Sharman.

As soon as the All Saints new Church project was completed, the PCC turned its attention to the extension of St Mary's Church. In 1966 it set up a St Mary's Building Committee which comprised, the Rector (Reverend Peter Graham); Reverend Hilary Sharman; the St Mary's District Wardens (Lt.Col. Victor Band and Mr John Tomlinson); Mr Alan Squire and Mr L T Woolley (St Mary's District Committee); Miss Mary Lane (All Saints); Mr Fred Hubbard (St Nicholas); Mr Henry Williamson (Parish Warden); and Mr Gordon Taylor ARIBA (Parish Architect).

A watercolour painting hangs in St Mary's Church which shows the church building as it was before the extension. The design produced by the Building committee for the extension, proposed pushing back the rear wall of the Church to the boundary with the common. This aimed at gaining space for a further 29 seats, building a new porch and vestry on the South side; enlarging the former schoolroom on the North side to provide a two-part room for Sunday School and social gatherings, as well as a kitchen, toilets, and storage space. The two-part room, by means of sliding doors on one side of the nave could be incorporated in the Church and the 41 seats which this would provide would bring total seating in the Church to 125.

The PCC approved the plans for the proposed extension. Claridge & Hall of Harpenden were appointed as the Contractors. Work began on 27 May 1968 and the project was

completed on 15 November of that year. While work was progressing in the Church, the congregation of St Mary's met for worship in the Kinsbourne Green Methodist Church.

An impressive service of re-dedication was conducted by the Bishop of St Albans on 19 December 1968 – almost 100 years after the original Church building was erected on the site.

In the years which have followed St Mary's has continued to thrive. The Associate Vicar with responsibility for St Mary's is a member of the wider clergy team of the Parish of Harpenden, headed by the Rector. The Associate Vicar has a special responsibility for the ordering of worship in the District Church and for the comfort and care of souls in the Kinsbourne Green area. He/she chairs the District Church committee. Since it became a District Church in 1958, St Mary's has welcomed 9 priests and each has made a special mark on, and contribution to, the life of the Church.

In the matter of furnishings and facilities St Mary's has benefited greatly from the generosity and bequests of members of its congregation. A special appeal enabled a pipe organ to be installed in 1993. The hall at the Church has met a long-felt need in the District and it has been of inestimable value to a wide range of communal activities in the Kinsbourne Green area.

From its foundation in 1869, St Mary's has provided a place where Christians have been able to foregather to worship Almighty God and to join together in a spirit of good neighbourliness Their prayers and witness have hallowed this small community Church which so amply reflects their unflagging love, care and concern.

May Almighty God continue to bless the work and life of the Church of St Mary-the-Virgin, Kinsbourne Green, Harpenden as it continues into the new millennium.

Contributed by R. Bradbury November 1999

Postscript to Ron Bradbury's History of St Mary's Kinsbourne Green.

The successful appeal leading to the installation of the Pipe Organ occurred during the Curacy of Julie Childs who was to become one of the first women to be ordained to the Priesthood in 1994 and thus the first woman priest-in-charge at St Mary's.

Unfortunately Julie died in the year following her priesting but during her time a Holiday Club had been started at the instigation of Shirley Barber, which had led to an increase in the number of children coming to the Sunday School. This was to have far reaching consequences.

The need for better accommodation for youth work prompted Julie's successor, Revd. Duncan Swan, to examine ways in which the Church and Hall could be enlarged. For a variety of reasons these ideas did not lead to a viable plan but Duncan did leave a legacy in the form of a link with the Jeel el Amal Children's Home at Bethany. This arose from a

pilgrimage to the Holy Land led by Duncan in March 1999 for people drawn from St Mary's and the wider parish.

By the time the Revd. James Reveley arrived in September 2000 the need for increased space for youth work had become pressing and under James's energetic leadership the idea of building out into the car park beside the Church was examined in detail. Eventually an acceptable plan was created with major input from the congregation including a splendid scale model built by Ian Hemmin. The new building designed by the Architect Michael Dales envisaged replacement of the existing vestry by an octagonal structure with a room above and incorporated a vestibule, disabled toilet and new doors into the existing Church.

Diocesan approval was given and costings obtained which revealed that the concept would require the raising of a minimum of £250,000 to bring it into being. This was a daunting sum particularly as it was a condition of Diocesan approval that the whole of the amount needed had to be in place before work could begin.

With support from St Nicholas PCC, a parish-wide appeal was launched in the Autumn of 2004 with a Committee under the Chairmanship of Phil Hepworth. Belief that the money could be found was supported by the existence of two substantial legacies left to St Mary's by former worshippers; May Harris and Janet Campbell but there was still much to be done.

It was a sad blow when James Reveley moved on in 2004 just as the main fund raising effort got under way but St Mary's people have a long history of coping during clergy vacancies and the Appeal Committee rose magnificently to the challenge.

Before moving to his new post James Reveley had the sad task of presiding at the funeral of John Cunningham CBE, DSO, DFC. DL. John was a distinguished war hero and civilian test pilot and he and his mother had been staunch supporters of St Mary's over many years. He was also a frequenter of The Fox, which is a near neighbour of St Mary's and upon his death the regulars at The Fox started a collection in his memory. The idea of a summoning bell as a feature of the extension had already been discussed in the planning stage and when it was mentioned to the regulars at the Fox they gladly gave it their support as a fitting memorial to John Cunningham. However Penny Alcock, John's next door neighbour on the Common turned the concept into a reality.

Revd. Jenny Pavyer succeeded James Reveley in 2005 and quickly became involved in moving the extension project forward with vigour. By the end of 2007 the large number and variety of fund raising events had brought the target within reach. With one last nail biting effort the objective was reached and by the year end the Builders were authorised to start.

Construction was rapid but not without problems. Kevin Goodbun, the husband of a member of the congregation with professional skills in project management was of enormous help in seeing the Church through the difficulties to the official dedication on 22

November 2008 by the Bishop of Hertford. The John Cunningham Bell, cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and installed in the apex of the new extension tower was unveiled by Air Commodore Rob Cunningham, a cousin of John and then dedicated by the Bishop.

The final stage in the project was to landscape the area. An Easter Garden given by Revd. Derrick Elliot and his wife Brenda in memory of Derrick's parents, which had stood on the site of the new vestry was recreated at the front of the building by Dilys Hemmin with plants donated by members of the congregation in memory of loved ones.

Thus a further milestone in the history of St Mary's had been brought to a successful conclusion. There was sufficient left in the Appeal Fund to cover some much needed improvements to the rest of the building but the new extension provided modern facilities not only for the Church's own work but also for the wider community who were able able to hire the upper room for meetings and social events. In recognition of this and the quality of the facility, the building was awarded a Harpenden Society Award in 2008.

Jenny Pavyer left St Mary's in January 2010. During her Curacy she married Simon Fennell, their son Andrew was born in 2008 when she took maternity leave – another first for the Parish.

Another period of vacancy then followed for the Church community. Continuity was however available as since 2000, St Mary's had benefited and continues to benefit from the ministry of Revd. Professor Nicolas Goulding as Honorary Assistant Priest and to his wife, Jenny, a licensed Reader who live in the District.

In June 2011, Revd. Becky Leach was licensed to serve at St Mary's, initially as Curate in Charge but subsequently her role was retitled, Associate Vicar. Becky very quickly established herself as an energetic and enthusiastic pastor to her new flock. A corner of the enlarged vestry created as part of the Extension opened in 2008, became her Office and she was soon joined by her dog, Rosie. Becky's presence "on site"with telephone access and internet availability brought us firmly into the 21st Century and so began a new chapter in the St Mary's story.

Initiatives under Becky's leadership have included an Olympics Service in 2012, a Messy Mass to mark the Festival of Christ the King also in 2012 and a major Easter Experience in 2013. This latter event involved the congregation helping to create a series of settings situated in the Church building illustrating key elements of the Easter story which were then used to describe the narrative to nearly 400 children from local schools.

New styles of worship have been introduced including Simply Worship on Sunday afternoons and Alternative Worship on Sunday evenings which have extended the reach of the Church to those coming to Church for the first time or looking for less traditional forms of worship. New members have begun to respond to these initiatives and after a period

when numbers of young people attending were in decline, growth in their numbers has begun to grow again.

Stronger links with local schools have been put in place under Becky's leadership and following the "Living Gods Love" initiative launched by the Rt. Revd. Alan Smith, the Diocesan Bishop, Mission Action Plans are being developed to look with fresh eyes and develop new ways of life and mission directed towards all who live in the St Mary's District .

The Rev'd Becky Leach moved to a Parish in St Albans and the Rev'd Sally Goodson is the current Associate Vicar.

Contributed by Fred Pointon May 2014. Update March 2017

A Further update to the History of St Mary's Kinsbourne Green

The last update in August 2019 took the Church to the verge of the start of the Covid Epidemic which began in January 2020 and whose consequences were to have a profound effect not just on St Mary's but the Country and indeed the World.

The rapid spread of the disease led to a national lockdown and the termination of all live services from 24 March 2020. However Sally, with the invaluable technical help of her husband Kelvin and supported by Nick and Jenny Goulding quickly responded. Live-streaming of services began immediately, with services of Morning and Evening Prayer from home. Video services were compiled and links sent out for our Sunday services each week, and our Simply Worship service once a month Thus much of the congregation could remotely access these forms of worship. We met for coffee by Zoom each week.

From July 2020 congregations were allowed back into Churches with suitable precautions being put in place. These involved everyone attending having to wear a face mask and use a hand sanitiser, which was provided in the lobby. A note was taken of those who attended and chairs were suitably spaced so everyone sat alone unless they were from the same household. Initially no singing was permitted but the organ was played and live streaming continued for those who wished/ needed to remain in isolation.

Sally's faithful maintenance of services despite the Church not being heated for much of the time was much appreciated and provided continuity of worship for all who wished to participate.

In November a small dedication ceremony was held to mark the putting in place in the Church garden of a memorial slate remembering past members of the congregation who had worshipped here.

The year closed with the imposition of a second National Lockdown from November which led to the abandonment of Christmas services and planned carol singing. Videoed or Live-streamed services resumed for our Christmas services and continued until March 2021 with the congregation returning after Easter as restrictions were eased. Simply Worship

also returned to Church after Easter but live streaming was also provided and several children learned how to operate the technology.

The emergence of new Covid variants continued throughout 2021 and thus social distancing continued to be practiced but live streaming was maintained as was the provision of recorded services. Many of the usual activities such as the Tuesday Afternoon Group and Little Lunch were resumed but two highlights were the completion of the Car Park project and instead of our usual Crib Service a walk-through experience called 'Come and Visit Bethlehem' was created which attracted visitors on 22 and 23 December.

The year was also notable for commitment to the Eco Church initiative. Initial steps included a service focussing on the environment ,a water theme for our Harvest Festival , regular litter picking locally, and promoting recycling.

We thus entered the New Year of 2022 with much of our usual services and events restored and as had been the case during the Covid period , vital continuity of support was provided to Sally by Nick and Jenny Goulding, the Lay Leaders of Worship, the organists and the many volunteers from amongst the congregation.

Highlights of the Year included the achievement of a Bronze Award for our Eco Church activities, increased focus on our MAP objectives , support for Ukrainian Refugees, the resumption of our Annual Fete and continued regular services at Homedell House .The annual Christmas Carol Service was also restored.

Sally was able to increase her involvement with Wood End School and the Family Worship Service grew in popularity.

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