

Parish of Aldingbourne, Barnham and Eastergate (ABE)

Annual Meeting of Parishioners will be held on Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 7.30pm in Eastergate Primary School

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayer.
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. Minutes of Annual Meeting of Parishioners 21 May 2025

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from: David Bathurst, Peter & Sheila Higgins, Lynne Sharrock, Tony & Mandy Foot, Sharon Priest, Eileen Keough.

2. Minutes of the 2024 meeting 22.05.2024:

These were agreed as a true record and passed unanimously

3. Election of churchwardens:

Four of the possible six positions were filled as follows:

Gary Courtnadge & Colin Mouque for Eastergate and Bradley Smith & Steven Maple for Barnham. There were no volunteers for Aldingbourne. CW as above were therefore duly elected. Father Paul thanked those who had and were about to serve in these important posts.

4. Election of Churchwardens.

Fr Paul Armstead (Rector)

14 April 2026

Parish of Aldingbourne, Barnham and Eastergate (ABE)

Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 May 2026 in Eastergate Primary School following the Annual Meeting of Parishioners

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of Annual Parochial Church meeting 21 May 2025

1. Apologies for absence

These were as recorded as for the parishioners meeting.

2. Minutes of the APCM 2024

Minutes of the 2024 meeting were proposed by Chris Wells and seconded by Sarah Tripp. They were unanimously accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3. Electoral Roll Report

Steven reported that following the full revision of the electoral roll, the number is 156 this is a decrease from last year, which always happens after there has been a full revision.

4. Report of the PCC

The PCC report was included with the trustees report. It was accepted with no questions.

5. Financial Statement:

Treasurer Chris Wells announced that the most pleasurable announcement he had for the meeting was that the parish continues to be solvent, with a positive difference of £12 between income and expenditure during 2024. This is immensely satisfactory bearing in mind significant outgoings made at Aldingbourne following their quinquennial and the acquisition of new falls for Aldingbourne.

However, a significant amount of the year's income came from legacies and funding awards rather than from regular giving by parishioners. And although the additional income covered the expenses the legacy had gone into restricted funds meaning our unrestricted funds had reduced by an equal amount. Gary led a vote of thanks to Chris for all his time and work during the year and Andrew Dunlop proposed the adoption of the accounts, seconded by Steven Maple and agreed by all.

6. Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church

This had been circulation prior to the meeting and was duly accepted with no questions.

7. Report of the Deanery Synod.

Circulated and accepted without questions.

8. Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC

There were two nominations for Barnham, Mary Camerer-Cuss and Lesley Bryant and for Eastergate, Hazel Staveley was nominated as replacement for Jonathan Stapleton who has not sought re-election. There are two spaces available for Aldingbourne, Steven Maple proposed that Sarah Nichol be elected and this was unanimously agreed.

9. Notice of Appointment of Sidesmen

The following were appointed as sidesmen for the forthcoming year:

Aldingbourne: those on the electoral roll for Aldingbourne

Eastergate: Tony Foot, Mandy Foot, Jean Rogers, Gill Lambourn, Liz Purdue, Mike Purdue, Lynne Stephens, Robin Thelwell, John Woodhead, Ros Woodhead, Richard Brown, Caterina Brown

Barnham: No sidesmen appointed by custom.

10. Rector's comments to the APCM

When you look at the Church Representation Rules, I keep a copy by my bedside in case I cannot sleep, they give the proforma agenda for the Annual Meetings that we are holding tonight. I look each year to check that we haven't missed anything and are in fact including everything. One item that does not appear on the proforma agenda is the Rector's Comments and so being true to the Rules, I had better sit down now. But before I resume my seat, I just want to say a couple of things. I stand before you as a stipendiary priest, I am paid a stipend, living expenses (not a salary) to allow me to walk alongside you as your Rector, a privilege and a joy. But I can only do so much and can only do part of the job. In order to complete the whole in church, the community and the school, I need help and that help comes from many, many volunteers. Volunteers who take the services, volunteers who keep our buildings safe and welcoming, volunteers who prepare for, conduct and join in our worship each and every day somewhere in this parish. Volunteers who ensure our school has proper and forthright governance. Volunteers who faithfully follow Jesus.

So whilst it is always dangerous to start naming people, I will hope you don't mind if I just say a huge thank you to a few by name. In no particular order, that sounds like the Strictly results show, firstly to my priestly colleagues, Fr Graham, Revd Sheila and Revd Susan. Your zeal for the gospel, zeal for pastoral care and example and willingness to do what I ask is a gift to this parish and enables us to maintain a full show on a Sunday and during the week and enhances our lives beyond measure – thank you.

To our churchwardens this year, the fab four of Bradley, Colin, Gary and Steven, who show such zeal for our people and buildings, more often than not going above and beyond, literally sometimes. Thank you for your service this last year and for standing for another year. And, in respect of Aldingbourne, to Sarah and team for their joint stewardship of all things St Mary's.

To Hedda and those gathered around her, for their zeal for evangelising the young of our parish, for the work with our very young, young and not so young. Vera and Roger for their zeal for ensuring the Rector is doing what he should be at the right time and the right place with the right bits and pieces, For sidesmen and women, readers, intercessors, organists, servers, bell ringers, flower arrangers, holy dusters, rota arrangers, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all, thank you. But above all, to each and every one of you all, for your zeal for Christ, in your lives, witness and faithfulness, for filling our churches and community with your lives of prayer and love for the Lord. Thank you!

BUT, and there is always a BUT, we must not be too self-congratulatory as we are a moving body that has many parts and these do and will change. The country is in a desert period of volunteering. People are busy! We need to be mindful of the roles and tasks that a parish, our parish, needs to fill and at times replace. We have 156 names on the freshly minted electoral roll, many of which have volunteered in the past and handed on the baton, others are currently volunteering and there are those who are needed now or will be. Which category are you? Which category do see others in? How can we ensure that all of our responses to being called to the body of Christ in this place ensures that we have and will always have the Parish of ABE that we love, continues to love and grow and flourish in the future. What can you do? We cannot and must not allow ourselves to stand still for one moment. God bless ABE!

11. A.O.B.

Colin requested all present to help at the Summer Fair on 14th June if at all possible and noted that the event at Barnham Community Hall this coming Saturday would be an ideal opportunity to sell raffle tickets and generally promote the fair.

Fr Paul announced that interviewing for the new Head Teacher at the school had commenced and asked all to pray for the outcome in their prayers.

There being no further business the meeting closed with the Grace at 8.03pm

3. Electoral Roll Report.
4. Annual Report of the PCC (see the attached reports)

5. Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2025 (Treasurer).
If you would like a full copy of the annual accounts please could you e mail or contact the Parish Office.
6. Report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church (*see attached churchwardens' reports*)
7. Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod.
8. (i) Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the deanery synod (4 of)
(ii) Election of parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC (6 of)
9. Notice of appointment of Sidesmen.
10. Appointment of an Independent Examiner.
11. Rector's (brief) comments
12. Any other business.

Fr Paul Armstead (Rector)
14 April 2026

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2025

a. Reserves policy

It is the PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (if possible), which is at least six months' unrestricted payments, to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time and to support irregular cashflow. The balance of £82,389 (2024: £94,454) on unrestricted funds at the year end is in line with this policy.

The £50,296 (2024: £41,983) in restricted funds are retained towards various purposes including repairs and improvements at each of the three churches, the Barnham toilet fund, Youth work and charitable donations.

b. Review for the year

The PCC monitors its finances in two parts, with the aim of covering ordinary running costs using regular donations, income from parish fundraising, events during the year and magazine profits. Any surplus or sizeable one-off donations are then held in reserve for designation by the PCC towards projects, repairs and improvements.

Overall income from all sources of £163,249 was almost the same as 2024 (£164,728), assisted by some generous donations specifically for the repair of the chancel ceiling at St Mary's Church Aldingbourne. General and unrestricted donations (£95,410) have recovered somewhat compared to 2024 (£87,671), but restricted donation receipts have declined by £5,818 reflecting the lack of any legacy income during the year.

Total tax efficient planned giving remained broadly steady compared to 2024, with just one more donor signing up to the Planned Giving Scheme. The gift aid tax rebate decreased to £16,037 from £20,614 in 2024, due to an increasing number of donations not being gift aided.

Non gift aided sundry and one-off donations amounted to £12,708 (£13,643 in 2024). Cash receipts from collection plates during services added £15,689 (£13,396 in 2024) benefitting from the card readers at each church.

Fetes and events income decreased slightly to £11,537 when compared to £11,656 in 2024.

The Parish News contributed income of £5,000 (£4,500 in 2024).

Overall expenditure in 2025 amounted to £165,051 (up from £164,715 in 2024). In 2025 this included £23,063 on items covered by restricted funds, including £14,261 on the new audio-visual system in St George's Church Eastergate, and £3,060 in running a water supply to St Mary's Church Barnham.

The parish contribution to the Diocese to cover clergy and diocese costs amounted to £74,500, an inflation-based increase on the £71,999 in 2024.

The expenditure on churchyard maintenance has increased to £9,641 (£5,147 in 2024) reflecting some significant tree work, and repairs to the gravel paths around St Mary's Aldingbourne. Grass cutting at St Mary's Barnham churchyard continued to be carried out by the churchwardens and at St George's Eastergate by members of the Community Payback team.

Utility costs including heating and lighting increased significantly to £12,949 (£9,946 in 2024), reflecting the reduced credit balances in electricity accounts at the beginning of the year.

In 2025, there was a decrease in the underlying value of our investment funds, managed by CCLA of £1,950.

This leaves an overall total loss of £3,752 for 2025, with total funds now £132,685 (£136,437 in 2024). As in previous years our regular unrestricted income from planned giving, church fundraising, and events has not been sufficient to cover all our expenditure, which is why the year end unrestricted balance has fallen. For several years we have relied on windfall and legacy income to make up the shortfall. Our fundraising for specific purposes (restricted) has however been successful this year, reflected in the increased balance in restricted funds at year end.

In summary, the finances of the Parish have been very carefully managed by the wardens and the PCC with funds allocated for essential repairs to the fabric of our churches and otherwise minimising expenditure wherever possible. *Chris Wells*

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORTS

ST. MARY'S CHURCH ALDINGBOURNE

Our services at St Mary's welcome a very regular congregation as well as several new faces. Father Paul, Reverend Sheila, Reverend Susan and Father Graham have led us in our spiritual journey together with welcome visits from Reverend Celia Woodruff and Canon Bruce Ruddock. All our visitors as well as new members comment on the friendliness of the church and the coffee after the service is much enjoyed by all. The church community has been a source of comfort and support to many throughout the year. Rosny Richardson and Peter Whitham ably provide us with our music, occasionally augmented by Tim Rumsey and John Staveley. During Lent and Advent some of us enjoyed joining with the Methodists for a soup and cheese lunch and discussion lead by Reverend Sheila.

In the absence of a church warden the church committee has continued to take responsibility for the running of the church and services. with clearly defined roles for sidesmen and servers. We always receive willing help from all the congregation while we continue to pray that someone will come forward to take on the role of churchwarden. In the meantime, we would like to thank Father Paul and the other churchwardens in the parish for their support.

The Church was much enhanced on both Palm Sunday and Easter by our new hangings as well as the flowers on Easter day. We were joined on Easter Sunday by about 15 others some of whom come regularly to St Mary's for the Festivals. During Advent and Christmas, we have welcomed many families to the church particularly for the Christingle and the Crib services both of which were very well

attended. Armistice Day was commemorated by a service at the War Memorial and then Remembrance Day by the usual service in the church. We welcomed the West Sussex Association of Bellringers to St Mary's for their annual service of remembrance.

In September the church was manned for the Sussex Historic Churches Trust annual Ride and Stride event with Richard Wilkins and Julian Buxton both raising money by cycling and walking and we hosted bat walks in September.

We have continued our relationship with Westergate Methodists with several of us joining them for Lent and Advent lunches followed by study at the Methodist Hall.

In February we said goodbye to one of the longest standing members of the St Mary's, Margaret Collins and then in December we were able to inter her ashes beside Gordon. It enabled us to say a proper farewell to Gordon who had died during covid. We had a further 3 funerals, 6 interments of ashes, 7 baptisms and 1 wedding. We also had a very well attended Thanksgiving service for Valerie Greenwood

In September a small piece of the ceiling above the Altar fell. The report from the church architect, David Swarbrick, recommended the possible replacement of the whole chancel ceiling as there is evidence of cracks throughout. We have obtained 2 quotes for this repair both of which come in at between £25,000 and £30,000 with the architect fees, diocesan fees etc added on. There has been fundraising for this and the treasurer, Chris Wells is looking into possible sources of funding.

Thank you to all those who help to run the church: the sidepersons and readers, intercessors, servers, cleaners, organists, bell ringers, Kim Shaw and the lockers-up, the flower arrangers led by Pauline Bettany and Beth Johnson; the Church Management Committee, and the Aldingbourne members of the PCC and particularly John Maltby who continues to make our churchyard look wonderful.

Sarah Nicol

ST. MARY'S CHURCH BARNHAM

During 2025, weekly worship at St Mary's, Barnham, continued to follow its established pattern with two celebrations of the Holy Mass every Sunday: a said celebration according to the Book of Common Prayer, and a sung celebration according to the modern rite. Mattins and Evensong were sung on almost every Sunday of the year, St Mary's being the only church in the Deanery to offer these services on a weekly basis. Numbers attending Evensong during 2025 were very small indeed, but we feel it is important to maintain this tradition.

Worship was offered in the church on almost every weekday, as a small group of lay people continued to meet almost daily to say Evening Prayer and offer intercessions. More attended on Tuesdays when Evensong is sung and followed immediately by Mass. All holy days were observed throughout the year.

Our worship is greatly enriched by music, and we are very grateful to our organists, Richard and Peter. Thanks are due to our team of servers, readers, Eucharistic ministers, and welcomers. The ministry and contribution of each person is greatly appreciated.

Fellowship plays a big part in the life of St Mary's. In addition to our annual Epiphany lunch – a three course Sunday lunch for over fifty people - we also enjoyed a number of suppers, as well as a celebratory meal on the Patronal Festival. Our preacher on that occasion was the Revd Philip Amey of St Wilfrid's Chichester. Once again, we enjoyed our two pilgrimages to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. Sadly, our annual coach trip was cancelled at relatively short notice owing to building works at the Chapel Royal, Tower of London.

Visitors often remark on the warm welcome they receive at St Mary's, and also on the appearance of the church itself which is beautifully cared for. The floral decorations at Easter, Christmas and the Patronal Festival were particularly striking, for which we record our thanks to Mary Camerer Cuss. The church is in a good state of repair, and we record our thanks to Graham Maple for his sterling work in the churchyard. A pair of fine oak hymn boards were donated by Brian David in memory of his mother, Dorothy David.

Fr Graham Reeves continued to serve St Mary's with great dedication during the year. It is impossible to overstate how much his ministry is appreciated. In 2025, we marked the thirtieth anniversary of his ordination with a special Mass and party. A statue of St Benedict was placed in the church in thanksgiving for his priestly service. We are grateful too for Fr Michael Palmer's ministry at St Mary's. Will Holder also preached several excellent sermons as part of his vocational discernment. Together with Fr Paul as Rector, we feel we are blessed with strong and faithful leadership. We also wish to record our thanks to Vera Saunders for all her administrative and practical help during the year, and to Chris Wells for managing the finances.

One of the biggest challenges limiting the future growth of St Mary's is the lack of a toilet and basic facilities. Unfortunately, progress stalled while waiting the appointment of a new inspecting architect following the retirement of Richard Meynell. We are immensely grateful for all the financial contributions received from members of the congregation and wider community that enabled us to take things forward in the early part of the year, but we are sorry that only modest progress could be noted at year end.

While numbers attending worship were sometimes smaller than we hoped, there exists a solid core who deeply value the worship, teaching and traditional ethos of St Mary's. Some travel many miles to share in our life. Sadly, some are no longer able to worship with us on a regular basis owing to age and infirmity, and we are very conscious that the lack of basic facilities, and the challenges of parking, present a barrier for some people. Only a handful of children attend regularly. Several funerals took place during 2025. In happier news, we celebrated several weddings and baptisms.

We are very aware that we have a fairly small congregation, with only a handful of young people; however, we continue to witness some modest signs of growth and renewal during the year. We were overjoyed to welcome large numbers of local people at Christmas and Easter, and a few have returned on other occasions. Despite the challenges we face, we still look to the future with confidence, trusting in the prayers of our blessed Mother, Mary, and all the Saints.

Bradley Smith & Steven Maple

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH EASTERGATE

St George's Church has continued to provide a focus of worship and Christian fellowship for its regular congregation and others from the surrounding villages. Our weekly services have been faithfully led by Fr Paul, Revd Sheila and Revd Susan who have continued to serve us so well and to whom we are, as ever, most grateful.

Ministry and outreach have continued to take a central role within the life of St George's. Twice-monthly house-group Bible Studies have continued, and a monthly Bible Study (weekly during Lent and Advent), attended by Eastergate and Aldingbourne church members, takes place with our Westergate Methodist friends. Attendance at this event, which is preceded by a bring-and-share lunch, has grown over the past year.

Other outreach has included, in early 2025, a course and discussion on the Lord's Prayer which was held in the Rectory. Care homes in the parish are regularly visited by our clergy and lay members alike. It is pleasing to report that our worship and ministry have been greatly enabled following the inauguration, last September, of the church's new audio-visual system. This facility, installed through funds raised in memory of the late Maggie Courtnadge, has been used for several services to date and for the Play-and-Pray group. As of the end of 2025, plans were underway to run an Alpha course using this equipment to provide a valuable means of outreach to existing church members and visitors (subsequently held as planned). The AV system has the potential to be used also for PCC and other meetings, as well as for social events and concerts. We are grateful to those who have encouraged and welcomed the introduction of this resource into the fabric, and life, of St George's Church.

The pre-school children's group, 'Play-and-Pray', has continued to meet in the church each Friday morning and to thrive in numbers. We are very grateful to Hedda Wells and Sharon Priest for their dedicated service in running this popular children's group.

Hedda also leads the school-age children's 'Sunday Seekers' group, which generally meets on a Sunday morning in the school hall. The group, which is ably supported by some parents, joins the 10am service

in church for communion and the final blessing. Messy Church events continue to be regularly held and are very popular with many children and their parents.

Again, we are so grateful to Hedda and her team for their ongoing commitment in providing these valuable forms of ministry to our young people.

A fuller report on St George's young people's ministry is included elsewhere in these reports.

There have been no significant building works or repairs necessary during the past year. Minor maintenance work has been undertaken as required, which has included repairs to a small area of plasterwork beneath the bellcote.

Re-shingling of the bellcote roof is still outstanding, along with the installation of a French drain along the south wall which is still a potential option for the remediation of flaking paint which occurs on the interior of that wall. Faculties and significant grant funding would be needed to enable these works to be carried out. The next quinquennial inspection is due in 2026 and a date has now been set for the Church Architect to undertake this in July.

The churchyard continues to be well maintained, and we are grateful for the services of Arun District Council's Community Payback team which continued to cut the grass weekly throughout 2025, and continues to do so at no cost to the parish.

The support of our church volunteers at occasional Saturday working parties has also been much appreciated. We thank all those who help tend the churchyard in many ways with dedication. Visitors continue to express appreciation for the upkeep of this beautiful and peaceful space.

The Granary continues to be used for church equipment storage, and we are grateful, as always, to Mr Paul Helyer of Manor Farm for allowing us to use the building and, of course, for providing parking space on the farm for our church use.

Church and vestry cleaning continues to take place by several willing volunteers on a fortnightly basis. The building benefits greatly from this regular cleaning and maintenance, for which we are very grateful to those who give their time so freely.

It is timely, as always, to express our gratitude to the many who give their time so freely to maintain the life, services and activities of St George's church. These include our sidespersons, sacristans, servers, intercessors, readers, organists, children's group leaders, and those providing refreshments. Often overlooked because they are rarely seen are our cleaners, flower arrangers, those who help maintain the churchyard and those who open and close the church each day.

We thank all those who help to make St George's church the flourishing and loving Christian family that it is. As usual, we must give special thanks to Vera and Roger for their guidance on many issues, and who do so much for the benefit of St George's and the wider parish.

We give especial thanks to Fr Paul for his leadership and guidance in the church's ministry. Also, to Sheila, Susan and Fr Graham for their ministry and work in the parish.

Gary and Colin thank everyone for the valuable support that they have received over the past year in carrying out their churchwarden duties.

Gary Courtnadge and Colin Mouque

PARISH NEWS DISTRIBUTION

We have 750 copies of the magazine printed at Ormiston School each month; there are 485 magazines being delivered, including copies for the three churches, postal copies, Eastergate Village Hall, and copies distributed at other fund raising events.

We have a total of 39 deliverers to whom we are extremely grateful.

Our grateful thanks go to Anne and Laurence Fosbury for the monthly challenge of co-ordinating the collection and deliveries of the magazine.

SAFEGUARDING

I am glad to be able to report that the Parish has had another year without any real safeguarding issues. The Parish is now registered on the Diocesan Safeguarding 'Dashboard'. At present we are on Level 2, as there are one or two items which need to be completed.

Once again, I would like to thank Sarah Nichol and John Haynes for their support, especially to John who has now stepped down from this rôle. *Peter Higgins*

PARISH NEWS

The Parish News generated income of £8489 (compared to £9100 in 2024) with advertising £5785 and subscriptions £2704. Printing costs have remained the same at £375 monthly, although the accounts don't include a late invoice for December. Administration costs were slightly down at £158 from £239. Overall contribution to parish funds made was £5000. It was proposed that subscriptions should be increased from £5 to £10 per annum in 2026. The last increase was in 2009 and the income from subscriptions no longer covered the printing costs.

Our grateful thanks to Helen Pearson for looking after the Parish News accounts.

PARISH NEWS ADVERTISING

Requests for renewals of ads for 2025 were sent out in the late Autumn of 2024, and we had a good response with most of our regular advertisers happy to continue for 2025.

We had a number of enquiries, throughout the year, resulting in new adverts placed – and some positive feedback from new advertisers whose ads have generated custom. We have also passed on copy for the Editorial section of the magazine to tie in with some of the adverts.

We ended the December edition with 58 regular ads in the Parish News, with a few gaps to fill. Rates remained the same as 2024. Our total revenue for 2025 (January – December) was £5785. Ads relating to Community services were included free of charge, with small fees for ads promoting local events.

We are still hoping to find a willing volunteer to take over the advertising who might be able to increase awareness. *Sarah Tripp*

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

This is the first revision of the Electoral Roll since the full revision of the Electoral Roll following the 2025 APCM.

The new Electoral Roll closed for new admissions on the 1st May 2026. The Electoral Roll following the revision, ended with 164 members. 8 names were added with 1 being removed.

Of the 164 members of the roll 135 people live within the parish boundary 29 people living outside the parish.

From information known of the names listed we have identified:

47 of the people attend or associate themselves with St Mary's, Aldingbourne, (no change from 2025)

51 of the people attend or associate themselves with St Mary's, Barnham, (an increase of 5)

75 of the people attend or associate themselves with St George's, Eastergate. (an increase of 2)

(several people attend or associate themselves with more than one church).

Steven Maple – Electoral Roll Officer

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The following Deanery synod meetings have taken place in the 2025-26 season.

16.07.25 Holy Cross N.Bersted

During this meeting, it was announced that the Rev Jo King would be leaving as Assistant Rural Dean. Thanks were given for her work. We were then given a talk on the work of a prison chaplain by the Rev Andy Curr, the current chaplain of HMP Ford open prison. He spoke in depth on the prison system and the issues they face.

06.11.25 St Andrews Ferring.

This was the Autumn Finance meeting attended by Church House, which was a joint meeting with the Worthing Deanery. We heard about the diocesan growth strategy, what it means for our deanery,

and got an update on the application to the national church for funding for that strategy. We also heard about the 2026 budget and 2026 parish ministry costs.

12.11.25 St Mary's, Yapton

The treasurer shared that all pledges for 2025 were met. We were informed of the following: Rev Richard Hayes is now Assistant Rural Dean (for three years), and Rev Dave Green has taken on the role of Deanery Secretary. Fr Tim Newton is now the curate in charge of St Mary's, Littlehampton. This is the last meeting of this triennium as Synod elections for lay representation take place this year at our APCMs. We were then given a presentation by Vitalis Ngwambi. Vitalis spoke about the church's vision for racial justice and its need to put words into action.

The next Deanery Synod meeting is set for Thursday, 16 July at St George's Church, Eastergate at 7.30 pm. *Will Holder*

SUNDAY SEEKERS

Sunday Seekers meet at Eastergate School during the Family Communion at St George's Eastergate for children aged 4 upwards. The sessions are timed so that the children join the service for communion. Average attendance is 6-10 children. Children younger than school age attend with their parent/carer. They are invited to attend the All-Age Service on the first Sunday of the month.

There are currently 7 adults on a rota consisting of 1 planner/leader and 6 helpers, all DBS checked. We have subscribed to Roots – an online resource website which covers young children, children, teenage and All Age services. It follows the church year and is a much-valued resource.

WELCOME TO THE LORD'S TABLE

In the summer term of 2025, 12 children attended the Lord's Table course. The course ran on one Sunday morning and 2 longer Sunday afternoon sessions.

YOUTH GROUP

There is currently no provision.

PLAY & PRAY

Pray and Play is a toddler group for the under 5s and their parent / carer. They meet every Friday morning in term time at St George's.

The session starts with prayer, singing and music, followed by a story and related craft, tea / coffee for parent / carer and play time for the children.

There are 2 leaders, Hedda Wells and Sharon Priest. A couple of the parents have also stepped in to take the lead in a session. This group is going strong and average attendance is between 10-12 children.

MESSY CHURCH

The planning team has 4 leaders (Suzannah Moroney, Natalie Cartwright, Catherine Annison and Hedda Wells) and we had 4 successful Messy Church sessions in the past 12 months with around 30+ children attending and an overall attendance of over 50 people.

They consist of an introduction to the overriding theme, a large range of activities, worship and sharing a meal (tea and cake). The sessions are aimed at ALL AGES but tend to be attended by families. We would like to encourage all adults to take part in the activities too as some are particularly designed for them and can be fun for all.

NIPPERS AND SLIPPERS

Is an initiative started in 2018. Once per term 10 – 12 older members of the congregation (organised by Mandy Parry) from all three churches come to Eastergate School to join 12 -15 pupils from the Reception Class for an hour of shared time. There is a link to Nyton House but they have not been able to attend and sent their apologies.

We start in a big circle with a song and circle games. Then there is a shared story which leads to linked craft activities followed by one to one story time which is equally valued and enjoyed. The Slippers enjoy the energy and the Nippers soak up the attention.

There are currently 2 sessions per term.

The slippers have also supported the school with Prayer stations. Over 2 days every class came into church and did a carousel of activities lead by an adult.

PARISH PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

During the past year the Parish Prayer Fellowship has met regularly on alternate Monday afternoons, in members' homes. We come together seeking to deepen our relationship with God, experiencing His peace and love more fully in our everyday lives.

We pray for wisdom, healing and guidance for the many needs of our church parish and community. We are truly grateful to God for the many unexpected ways that our prayers are answered.

Through our prayers God is very much present in our community, quietly meeting our needs and bringing much needed peace and encouragement to those whom we pray for.

We have so much on a daily basis to thank God for. Please join us – everyone is welcome

Sharon Priest and Ann Barker

