



**Great  
Malvern Priory**

**Great Malvern Priory  
Reports to Annual Meeting  
2024**

## **VICAR'S INTRODUCTION**

This is my last APCM report (after 32 in total), and I am delighted that Rita and I are bowing out with the congregation at the Priory in such good heart. There is much to thank God for; I hope the future will bring His Kingdom closer in Malvern.

We have been most grateful to our church staff – James, Rob, Richard and Mark, the Custos team; Anne, the Church Manager; Catherine, the Parish Administrator and Finance Assistant; and Piers, the Musical Director. James has moved on to pastures new, and we wish him well. Dylan has begun as James's replacement and has made an excellent start.

So many things are happening at the Priory that I cannot comment on them all. So I would like to highlight six areas in particular.

Firstly, Jeremy Wray, Neil Paulley and the Priory Development Plan Steering Committee have continued to work hard to progress the Priory's development. This team's application and dedication are inspiring, and I hope and pray the rewards will be reaped and that the Heritage Fund agrees to support us. It would give Rita and me immense pleasure to return to see all the work on the medieval windows and the new build complete. I am very confident this will happen. There is such motivation and talent here.

Secondly, in last year's report, I wrote that the Creation window was with York Glaziers, and the roof of St Anne's Chapel had been renewed. I am delighted to say that the window was returned successfully. It has been cleaned and conserved, so there should be very little deterioration. The cleaning revealed some parts of the glass that hadn't been identified previously, like a small picture of the devil in the branches of the Tree of Knowledge. Wonderful! The Friends worked so hard to raise funds and have continued to actively promote the heritage of the Church. The Friends' shop continues to be skilfully managed by Leigh Ralphs and her volunteers.

Lunch Box should be given special mention as a joint Priory and Friends enterprise. Some of the talks have been outstanding, and the community's support for Lunch Box continues to grow. The Priory Tours are organised by the Friends too, and have been most successful. The Chair of the Friends, Anne Eglington should be rightly proud of all that The Friends have achieved this year.

As Easter approaches, we anticipate returning fully to the Priory and enjoying our new level floor and underfloor heating. This has been a massive project, and again we should thank Jeremy Wray, Robin La Fontaine, and many others for their work in achieving this. Our close working relationship with Malvern College bore fruit when they agreed to host us on Sunday mornings whilst the work was being completed. This was most generous. Our fundraising team worked hard throughout the year, helped by a brave Rita and her aeronautical adventure. Thank you all.

Thirdly, Great Malvern Priory continues to provide excellent ministerial training. Gilly Maxim, Phillippa Lowe, and Claire Darnborough are all experiencing training at Queen's College in Birmingham. Tristan Mitchell, from our 8.00 am congregation, has begun his training at Trinity, Bristol, too. We have all benefited from the excellent sermons our 'trainees' preached. The LLMs at the Priory are the most talented group of ministers I have ever worked with, and our retired priests are indispensable too. I really value their wisdom. Adam has been priested, and we find his ministry invaluable and inspiring. We are so fortunate to have him.

Fourthly, our PCC Committees have worked very hard. The Mission Committee, led by Rachel Huntley, is an exciting committee buzzing with ideas. Initiated by some Godly inspiration from Rachel Aldis, the two Women's Breakfasts have been most successful. The introduction of Mission Reports at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Morning Worship has kept us in touch with our mission partners, and we recently completed a very successful Romans Course. Philippa Lowe, our Communications Coordinator, Katherine Little, and the Comms team have been excellent at updating our website (don't we enjoy the blogs!), improving our postings and displays and helping us introduce screens to display information to our visitors.

Thrisha, our Treasurer, Derek Valentine, Chair of Finance, Robin La Fontaine, Planned Giving Co-ordinator, and the Finance Committee keep our accounts and stewardship in order and encourage us to budget responsibly. If you give to the work of the Priory (and so many of you do—thank you!), you can be assured that the money is spent wisely and prudently.

Richard Weatherill, Chair of Worship, leads a committee that delivers a wide variety of worship services. The introduction of a Healing Service once a term

has been most welcomed. Working with our young people has been challenging as it took a blow from the COVID restrictions, and FROGs hasn't recovered fully (despite a lot of commitment and hard work from the leaders).

Nevertheless, Messy Church and Identity have been highlights in our work with children and young people, and we look forward to beginning discussions with a Mission Accompanier to help us address some issues very soon. Lifepath continues to be a fantastic success, and we are so grateful to Mary Campbell and her team for organising this. Lifepath is a tremendous mission to children – it is stunningly well-organised and well-received by the schools (thank you, Catherine Ponting!).

Safeguarding remains a top priority and is such an important area of church life to get right. Fortunately, it is in the safe hands of our Church Manager, Anne Rich.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee looks after the building on a day-to-day basis. They have overseen the installation of the new AV system, which has been much welcomed by those sitting in the side aisles on Sunday mornings. It is wonderful, too, to be able to see our bellringers hard at work before the Sunday morning services.

Fifthly, under Piers Maxim's inspired leadership, music at the Priory has flourished. The junior choristers have sung their hearts out; their yearly concert is always a highlight. The choirs continue to sing beautifully, particularly at signature services such as Advent Sunday, Christmas, Epiphany and Easter. The Organ recitals remain well supported and are an essential in Priory life. We are most grateful to Geoff Fearnough for having organised these for many years. Worship Band, Praise Group and Orchestra have contributed significantly to providing a rich style of musical worship at the Priory.

Finally, the Pastoral Group and PALs continue to oversee the pastoral work at the Priory, which is very important. There have been some fantastic stories of PALs making a difference in supporting folks in need. Just a Cuppa has been a delight. Although the numbers vary, we have regulars now, and our visitors have been very impressed by the welcome they receive on Saturday mornings. The Welcome Days have been perfect, too, with the pre-Christmas one in 2023 breaking all records. The clergy continue to provide home communions to housebound people, which is also welcomed.

You can't help but read this report and be encouraged by the ministry in this church. We have certainly not been lukewarm, and all of this has happened because Jesus is at the centre of everything we do.

As always, I am indebted to a hardworking PCC, Alistair Sawers as PCC Secretary and our churchwardens Neil Paulley and David Guy. They have all striven to keep me focused and encouraged, and I give thanks to God for their care for Rita and me. What happens next is in God's hands, but I am sure the future will continue to be exciting as we strive to build God's Kingdom in Malvern.

*Rod Corke*

## **STATUTORY REPORTS**

### **REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER**

There are 311 names on the Electoral Roll. This is 3 fewer (8 removed and 5 added) than at the APCM 2023. A full revision of the Roll is due next year, 2025.

*Robin La Fontaine*

### **PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2023-2024**

It takes considerable organisation to enable the Priory to function as well as it does. There is so much going on. We employ only five (essential and much valued) regular members of staff to keep the wheels turning and rely heavily upon many others from within the congregation to keep us afloat (apologies for the mixed metaphors).

The PCC has met as a body throughout the year, as have its five committees (Buildings & Grounds, Finance, Mission, Priory Development Plan and Worship) and the many groups which report to them. This year there have been four regular meetings of the PCC, two extraordinary meetings (to progress the nave floor project) and an Away Day at St James's Welland. In some churches PCC meetings can be rubber-stamping exercises. Members of our congregation can be reassured that this is not the case with the Priory PCC! There is often healthy debate, enabling considered, consensus opinions to be reached. Keeping the congregation informed of the outcome of discussions is important and

reports of proceedings have been made available after each meeting (via the weekly email and hard copies at the back of church).

At the beginning of the PCC year, each committee drew up its Mission Action Plans, which were published and have been kept under review throughout the year. The committees are always busy, but this has been particularly so over the past year with the nave floor levelling project and progressing our bid for National Lottery Heritage Fund support for the Priory Development Plan. We are indebted to all involved and to the Chairs of the committees for all the extra work they have undertaken.

Please consider standing for election to the PCC. We have at least 5 vacancies every year. Who knows, it may go in your favour on the day of judgement!

*Alistair Sawers*

# Great Malvern Priory PCC membership 2023-2024

## Ex-officio members:

Licensed clergy: Revd Rod Corke (Chair)  
Revd Adam Wharton

Churchwardens: Neil Paulley  
David Guy

## Deanery Synod members:

(elected 2023, retiring July 2026)

Rachel Huntley  
Robin La Fontaine  
Gilly Maxim  
Derek Valentine  
Richard Weatherill

## Ordinary members of PCC:

(elected 2023, retiring 2026)

Claire Darnborough  
Philippa Lowe  
Gill Munro  
Alistair Sawers  
Jeremy Wray

(elected 2022, retiring 2025)

James Hall

(elected 2021, retiring 2024)

Jude Butler  
Rob Sykes

(co-opted 2023-24)

Thrisha John (Treasurer)  
Helen Wall (Vice Chair)

*19 members*

*7 casual vacancies (for ordinary members of PCC)*

**In attendance** Anne Rich (Church Manager)

## **SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

It is a requirement that those working with children and vulnerable adults, in a paid or voluntary capacity, attend a Diocesan Basic Safeguarding Awareness Training course every three years. In 2023 this training was carried out online.

In 2023 the PCC continued to use the on-line self-assessment tool – Parish Dashboards – to monitor progress and to determine an action plan. No outstanding actions were deemed (by the system) to be urgent.

During 2023 DBS checks were carried out for 45 volunteers

One issue required support from DSA/ADSA.

Diocesan update: The Diocese is to undergo an audit of its safeguarding procedures and practices in July 2024 (with the process beginning in March 2024). This will involve input from parish level.

Policies relating to safeguarding, GDPR, Health & Safety and Recruitment of Ex-Offenders were brought to the March 2024 meeting of the PCC for reconfirmation.

*Anne Rich*

## **CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT ON FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS**

This has been another significant year in the long life of the Priory with major activities including the conservation of the Creation window, the re-roofing of St Anne's chapel, a new ringing chamber fire escape, installation and commissioning of the AV system and preparations for the nave floor levelling.

Throughout the year, the Custos has monitored the church inventory on behalf of the churchwardens, and the custos team has carried out the usual round of inspections and servicing. We thank them for all the work they put into keeping the Priory running with the myriad of services, events, visitors and contractors needing access. Working parties have helped keep on top of the significant cleaning requirements, and we are grateful for them and for the many people



who work in so many different ways around the church, assisting in keeping the building, contents and ornaments in good repair and clean condition.

James, our Custos, stepped down at the turn of the year. We are very pleased that in early 2024 Dylan Farrier was appointed to the role. We would like to express our appreciation to James for his help to us and for all that that he has done while Custos at the Priory. We would also like to acknowledge the sterling work throughout the year of Anne, our Church Manager, and Catherine, our Parish Administrator.

Our thanks go to the Clergy, retired Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers for leading our services and preaching, to everyone involved in providing the rich and varied music which is such a key part of our worship, and to all who contribute to our services.

Finally, but not least, Rod our Vicar announced he will be retiring in July 2024; we will be very sorry to see him go but hope he and Rita have a well-earned and happy retirement. We are so grateful for all the support he has given us.

*Neil Paulley and David Guy*

## **MALVERN AND UPTON DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

Revd. Gary Crellin is the new Area Dean, taking over from Revd Mark Badger who is now Archdeacon. Revd Chris Moss has now retired from Longdon benefice and Revd Julie James, Rector of the United Benefice of Berrow with Pendock, Eldersfield, Birtsmorton and Hollybush, will provide oversight of the Longdon benefice parishes and continue exploring with them options for the future. The Deanery Leadership Team (DLT), is seeking a candidate to join the team to cover the remit of Children, Youth and Families. The Deanery Strategy is still in draft form and detailed discussions have not yet been held with the more urban parishes such as Malvern Priory.

*Robin La Fontaine*

## **DIOCESAN SYNOD**

*Diocesan Transformation Strategy:* the Diocese has been awarded money from the central church funds for a 7 year transformation initiative. This includes having at least one church of 150+ members in each urban area, double the

number of children (based on 2019 figures), and 100 new worshipping communities (Messy church, Forest church etc.).

*Living in Love and Faith:* Draft prayers have been commended by the House of Bishops for use by ministers in the exercise of their discretion for couples including same-sex couples in a committed relationship.

*Annual report and accounts:* Small surplus for the year - this represents a significant improvement made over the past few years.

Churches are encouraged to host hustings during the General Election later this year.

*Robin La Fontaine*

## **PCC COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The Management Team meets every 3 weeks to deal with matters involved in the day-to-day running of the Priory.

In the course of the past year, Health & Safety matters have included an updating of the Priory Fire Risk Assessment.

The service of the Coronation of King Charles III was screened live in the church and was well attended.

An additional card-reader (with no fixed payments) was procured for use at events held in the Priory.

Following on from the Success of the 2022 inaugural Malvern Storytelling event, a second was held in 2023 (again in collaboration with MHDC and Boffy Arts and Events). A third is planned for 2024.

Collaboration with two further community groups (Malvern Sketchers and FEAST) proved successful and events are to be repeated and expanded in 2024.

Plans for a wildflower garden area within the churchyard (with support from MHDC) reached fruition and a survey of the churchyard flora suggested over 70 different species are present.

*Anne Rich*

## **BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS**

There have been no major problems with the condition of the building. Routine maintenance has included repointing of stonework, minor repairs, clearing of gutters and drains.

A number of minor leaks to the Victorian lead roofs have manifested themselves and been dealt with.

The ringing chamber safety improvements are complete, with a new fire door on the tower stairs, new break-glass key holders, an additional fire detector, and new steps and safety rails on the chancel roof mustering zone.

The Audio-Visual system is fully operational including a camera in the ringing chamber and also one covering the church clock. The view of the bell ringers was displayed to great effect during, for example, the Christingle services.

The two large television screens have been used very effectively to display a record of the progress of the nave floor work, and also a wider story of the Priory, including the Creation Window work.

In the churchyard the central cedar tree has been saved from felling by a changed approach to maintenance, agreed with an expert. A wildflower area has been developed in the NW corner of the churchyard.

The installation of underfloor heating across the nave area has demonstrated our commitment to contributing to CofE Net Zero Carbon 2030. A large air source heat pump will be installed in the mason's yard within the next 18 months.

We have been somewhat blighted by power cuts across the centre of the town, causing problems to our systems, especially in the run up to Christmas.

Our external sodium floodlights are obsolete and will soon require replacement with LED units which will give a warmer white light.

The 2023 Quinquennial Inspection Reports have been completed. We are progressing steadily with our current Mission Action Plan.

Grateful thanks to the church management and custos team, and to the members of the B&G Committee.

*Jeremy Wray*

## **PRIORY DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

There has been significant progress on the Plan during the year.

In 2022 work to restore the glass and surrounding stonework of the Creation Window in St Anne's chapel commenced; this was completed in May 2023. The PCC had also authorised the repair and renewal of some timbers and the lead covering to St Anne's Chapel roof. This too was completed in early 2023.

In 2023 the PCC embarked on one aspect of the Plan - the lowering of the two nave pew plinths. An architect was appointed to undertake the design and management of the project, including the installation of underfloor heating which will eventually be connected to a heat pump, thus reducing our carbon footprint. Contractors were appointed in November and work commenced in early 2024 with expected completion by Easter 2024. A small group coordinated fundraising events during the year and their sterling efforts have recently been augmented by some grants from external grant-making organisations. Following careful planning, with the nave closed during progression of the work, we moved our main Sunday service to Malvern College Chapel. We are very grateful to the College for facilitating this and accommodating us.

Following a rejected Expression of Interest (Eol) to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in December 2022 for funding support for the Plan, we submitted an amended Eol in September 2023. The NLHF responded favourably with an invitation to prepare a Round 1 submission for grant funding for the Development Phase. They visited us in December to see our plans in more detail and discuss how we might move forward. They were supportive of the plans. Following recent changes to their strategic funding priorities we need to adapt our application for funding and our approach to the project to address these.

*Neil Paulley*

## **FINANCE (plus financial statements for 2023)**

The PCC Finance Committee is delegated with the task of supporting the Treasurer in maintaining oversight and organisation of the Priory's financial situation.

Principally, this involves recommending the annual operating budget to the PCC and monitoring performance against the budget, leading to the production of the annual accounts. A summary of the Annual Report and Accounts is presented in the following pages.

Stewardship giving from regular worshippers provides roughly two-thirds of our total unrestricted income and PCC is grateful for the support of the 150 or so regular givers, both individuals and families. However, cost pressures remain significant and the reduction in visitor income through the period of the building works is expected to result in an operating deficit in 2024.

Increasingly, as well as the day-to-day requirements of running the Priory's operating income and expenditure, a number of major capital projects are being undertaken. These will require additional financial governance to be established.

Recent projects are described elsewhere but the cost of the works undertaken on the Creation Window, St Anne's Chapel roof as well as the floor levelling has been well over half a million pounds. This has been funded through a mixture of individual donations and legacies as well as external grants. Over the last two years, The Friends of Malvern Priory has contributed approaching £200,000 to PCC funds, largely to support these capital projects, for which PCC is very grateful.

Further significant expenditure will be required to implement the Priory Development Plan for which fundraising will be a considerable challenge. Please consider ways you might support this vital ministry.

We remain thankful for all the work done by our Treasurer, Dr Thrisha John and for the support of Catherine Ponting, Finance Assistant. Thanks too to Robin La Fontaine, Planned Giving Co-ordinator, assisted by James Hall.

*Derek Valentine*

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SAINT MARY AND SAINT MICHAEL GREAT MALVERN

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

### Current financial year

	Notes	Unrestricted funds general 2023 £	Unrestricted funds designated 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Endowment funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
<b>Income from:</b>							
Voluntary income	3	266,012	255	208,542	-	474,809	336,602
Incoming resources from charitable activities	4	56,654	-	6,151	-	62,805	177,439
Activities for generating funds	5	4,699	-	-	-	4,699	6,045
Investments	6	14,326	-	2,486	-	16,812	12,475
<b>Total income</b>		<u>341,691</u>	<u>255</u>	<u>217,179</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>559,125</u>	<u>532,561</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>							
Raising funds	7	3,124	-	-	-	3,124	3,765
Charitable activities	8	334,152	18,572	197,932	-	550,656	549,144
<b>Total resources expended</b>		<u>337,276</u>	<u>18,572</u>	<u>197,932</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>553,780</u>	<u>552,909</u>
Net gains/(losses) on investments	14	31,007	-	2,137	6,261	39,405	(41,035)
<b>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers</b>		<u>35,422</u>	<u>(18,317)</u>	<u>21,384</u>	<u>6,261</u>	<u>44,750</u>	<u>(61,383)</u>
Gross transfers between funds	15	6,308	(6,494)	22,356	(22,170)	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<u>41,730</u>	<u>(24,811)</u>	<u>43,740</u>	<u>(15,909)</u>	<u>44,750</u>	<u>(61,383)</u>
Fund balances at 1 January 2023		<u>101,143</u>	<u>315,061</u>	<u>150,677</u>	<u>92,057</u>	<u>658,938</u>	<u>720,321</u>
<b>Fund balances at 31 December 2023</b>		<u><u>142,873</u></u>	<u><u>290,250</u></u>	<u><u>194,417</u></u>	<u><u>76,148</u></u>	<u><u>703,688</u></u>	<u><u>658,938</u></u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SAINT MARY AND SAINT MICHAEL GREAT MALVERN

## BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	2023		2022	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Investments	16		513,534		474,130
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	18	15,136		58,356	
Investments	19	176,568		144,612	
Cash at bank and in hand		32,667		76,192	
			224,371		279,160
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	20	(34,217)		(94,352)	
Net current assets			190,154		184,808
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			703,688		658,938
<b>Capital funds</b>					
Endowment funds	22		76,148		92,057
<b>Income funds</b>					
Restricted funds	23		194,417		150,677
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>					
Designated funds	24	290,250		315,061	
General unrestricted funds		142,873		101,143	
			433,123		416,204
			703,688		658,938

The accounts were approved by the Trustees on 2 April 2024

Reverend R Corke  
Trustee

## **MISSION COMMITTEE**

The Mission Committee continues to reach out in the name of Christ with the five Marks of Mission. We are conscious of the work of the many people in the Priory who are involved and the groups who facilitate this.

A review of how we allocate our giving to the missions we support has been undertaken and works well in practice. The mini talks about missions on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month have raised their profile to the congregation, with a follow-up monthly profile in the magazine.

The Festival of Nativities was successful; we hope to recruit more guides for it next year. A Nativities' Preview evening (tri-annual) had wonderful music from the Jenny Lind Singers and 3 snapshots of the meaning of Christmas by members of the congregation, with 70 guests attending. The aim for 2024 would be to involve The Parish Primary School.

A second Women's Breakfast took place in February with 60 attendees and a great talk by Becky Elliot. We are planning an annual event each Spring. A few follow-up coffee get-togethers have been organised in the Alturo Lounge.

We are exploring ways to support the needs of the parish and aim to work with others (such as Christians Against Poverty).

Another initiative has been a new welcome card with options for follow-up, which will be in the seats at services. We would aim to connect with and welcome those coming to services in the Priory.

We are thankful for so many outreach events in the Priory, whether it be welcomers and pastoral care/PALS, mid-week activities or the bigger events which also reach beyond our congregation such as Lifepath, Messy Church and Christmas Open Day etc. We are grateful for the sacrificial and often hidden service of those in our congregation.

*Rachel Huntley*

## **MISSION COMMITTEE GROUP REPORTS**

### **COMMUNICATIONS GROUP**

Any idea why the Priory's here today?

Well, if no-one had shared the Good News, it simply wouldn't be!

And the Comms Group is working to make sure that *everyone* knows what's



going on at the Priory and how to get involved. We're the first point of contact for all types of media – local press and broadcast media (Mary), social media (Tony), community engagement (Jude), seasonal print (Katherine) and the Priory website (Philippa).

...posters - flyers - tickets - radio - newspapers - magazines - questionnaires - blog posts - website - Instagram - Facebook - info screens - time capsule... We really welcome being asked to publicise Priory services and activities. Don't be shy – ask us to share your Good News.

*Philippa Lowe*

## ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Following the Priory's Bronze Eco-Church Award, we are now working towards a Silver Award. Unfortunately some of the requirements are outside our control, so we need the continued support of the PCC and congregation.

During the year we have put various ideas in the magazine and the weekly notice sheet to help people change their lifestyle. A stall at the Harvest service showed the variety of Fairtrade goods on offer in local shops. In October Tim Wolff led a fungi walk to show people the fascinating fungi we often ignore. We are also trying to use only locally grown flowers in church to reduce our carbon footprint.

Our churchyard now has a wildflower area, thanks to cooperation with the local council, and we participated in the Count on Nature survey of wildlife in the churchyard; hopefully both of these will grow in future.

Our annual Environment Service in May involved the congregation pledging to care actively for God's creation. The 2024 service will be on 9 June, with a distinguished guest speaker.

Peter Lawrence stepped down as our chairman, but is still a valued member of the Group and we have recruited 3 new members.

*Mary Weatherill*

## HOME GROUPS

Home groups have continued through the last year, usually meeting weekly or fortnightly. There is an increasing need for more places in the current groups as well as for new groups and leaders. Some groups have revised membership

while others have lost or gained members. The need to engage with returning and new members of the Priory to make them aware of the present groups and to see where new groups are needed is part of the programme for the coming year. The recent Romans Course could encourage some to continue their spiritual searching in home groups. It is hoped to run another Home Groups Sunday Service, as a 'Songs of Praise' with comments from several group members. It will provide another introduction to groups and their value for the congregation. Home groups have an important place in the life and work of the Priory and in uniting the whole church as one in the Lord's name.

*Tony and Rosemary Whalley*

## LIFEPATH

In the last 12 months, we have had a further 'Lifepath' where there were over 600 children in attendance from around 20 local schools. We totalled around 120 volunteers throughout the week but with many more praying and preparing behind the scenes. We had lots of positive feedback from schools and volunteers alike.

Lifepath will run again in June 2024 and arrangements are currently in full swing. We pray for this forthcoming event, that planning and preparations go smoothly, for schools and children due to attend that they feel welcomed and excited to engage in the activities and experience, as well as for volunteers, that they are energised and enthused to participate and share the Lifepath story.

*Mary Campbell*

## LUNCH BOX

Large audiences from the Malvern community regularly enjoyed Priory hospitality and welcome on Thursday lunchtimes, eating their lunch together over coffee and cake before listening to a variety of entertainment. Lunch Box is a joint venture between the Friends and the PCC. A short prayer at the start reminds us of God's presence in all that we do.

There were fascinating talks by Ledbury Morris with dancing, *150 years of Entertainment in Malvern* (Chris Bassett), *TEMWA – supporting communities in Malawi* (Jo Hook), *Buen Camino – path or pilgrimage* (Julia Goodfellow-Smith),

*Florence Nightingale in Malvern* (Cora Weaver), *Ramblings of an Old Fashioned GP* (David Webster) and *Living with Conflict in the Middle East* (Colin Chapman).

There were superb lunchtime concerts by Malvern College, Malvern St. James, Lucton School, Linda Hardwick & Michael Oakley, Malvern Community String Orchestra and Malvern Parish School. In February 2024, an additional special Lunch Box concert by Malvern College in St. Edmund's Hall raised £200 for the Priory floor project.

Refreshment sales raised £574 for the PCC.

Retiring collections raised £312 (DEC), £525 (TEMVA), £582 (Christian Aid's Gaza Appeal), £203 (The Friends) and £111 (Children's Society).

Thanks go to Pam Hope, Sally Fallon, Jenny Killam, Robert Payne and all who make Lunch Box such an enjoyable event.

*Anne Eglington*

## MAGAZINE

Nothing new to report! Our advertisers remain loyal although some were lost due to the increase in rates but new ones do come along. Here are some average monthly statistics which may be of interest.

Number of magazines printed: 300

Numbers sold: 250 (the balance goes to the library)

Number of 'hits' on the website for current month's issue: 96 (1.56% of traffic)

Number of 'hits' on the website for past issues: 22 (0.36% of traffic).

Our ongoing concern is how to increase the sale of money-making printed magazines. For this we depend entirely on visitors and congregation members buying the magazine in the Priory. Last year Vicar Rod volunteered to 'advertise' each new publication on the first Sunday of the month when giving out Notices, and it gratifyingly worked for the March '23 edition!

We remain concerned that the website continues to steal our thunder on the exciting events going on in the Priory. I'm told that it doesn't but.....I always was a 'doubting Thomas'!

*Meryn Nance*

## MOTHERS' UNION

MU @ the Priory is a growing group with two new members admitted during the year. We are part of a prayerful worldwide fellowship with links including Marsabit, Kenya and Morogoro, Tanzania.

We meet on the first day of every month for Prayer and Fellowship. A Newsletter, MU at the Priory, is produced online with hard copy available in church. Raising awareness of modern slavery and sixteen days of activism against gender-based violence are topics we learnt and prayed about.

The local Festival was held in St George's Worcester where we welcomed Jude Butler as a member and Dorothy received recognition of 50 years as a member.

In September we joined the diocesan coach to Harrogate. The MU General Meeting in York was followed by evensong in the Minster which will long be remembered for the inspirational sermon of the Archbishop of York given to a large congregation soaked by a storm while we queued to enter!

Members helped at Priory events including the Women's Breakfast organised by Rachel Huntley.

We are coordinated by Jill Crofton, Sally Hodge and Dorothy Knights. In the diocesan MU Jill is Vice President for the South, Sally is a Trustee, also chairing Malvern World Day of Prayer committee, and Dorothy coordinates MU Speakers.

*Dorothy Knights*

## PASTORAL CARE

It's been a busy year for the Pastoral Team and Priory Area Links (PALS).

We've held two Newcomers' Welcome Teas and shared in a Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance. We have made and delivered Harvest posies to the housebound and those who have had a difficult year. Diana and her team of cooks have provided meals, when required, to folks in need of them. We are looking forward to recommencing Just a Cuppa in The Priory very soon.

The Pastoral Team and PALS have supported the clergy by visiting folks in hospital, nursing homes or their own homes. They have kept in touch by phone calls and emails. John and Susie have continued to send 'get well' cards from the Priory to those in hospital.

We are delighted that ten new PALS have joined our team and we welcome them all.

This is my last Pastoral Report and I would like to thank the Pastoral Team and all our wonderful PALS for the privilege of working alongside you. It's been a real pleasure! Thank You ALL for your continued care for our Priory Church Family.

*Rita Corke*

## **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

We were privileged, once again, to provide a wide range of services at the Priory during 2023.

Amongst other highlights, the new 'Service of Healing and Wholeness' proved successful and has been continued into 2024. Our Festal Evensong celebrating the coronation of King Charles, when the choir was joined by other local RSCM members, was much appreciated. Attendance at the Pets Service improved thanks to better publicity. The initial part of our Service of Remembrance was held jointly with Malvern Town Council; broadly similar arrangements will apply again this year.

More generally, the new AV system has proved a real benefit, especially with the link to the Ringing Chamber. Discussions continue on how some Priory services might be live-streamed without breaching safeguarding or copyright regulations.

The small number of young people attending Priory services remains a concern. We hope that the Mission Accompanier, provided by the Diocese, will generate renewed impetus in this area. The Junior Choir is also in need of new recruits.

Malvern College kindly allowed us to use their chapel for our main Sunday morning service for the first few months of this year whilst the nave floor-leveling project was under way. The move went remarkably well and thanks are due to all who worked so hard to achieve this, particularly our Churchwardens, Neil and David.

Looking ahead, the Committee has produced a Pattern of Worship for 2024 which seeks to maintain all our usual services, despite the forthcoming vacancy.

We have benefited greatly from Rod's wisdom and enthusiasm throughout his time at the Priory; we wish him and Rita a very happy and fulfilling retirement.

I am grateful to all the groups that report to Worship Committee for faithfully enhancing worship at the Priory, each in their own special way. Please do read their reports below.

*Richard Weatherill*

## **WORSHIP COMMITTEE GROUP REPORTS**

### **BELL RINGERS**

Bell ringing for all Sunday morning services was achieved. Ringing was provided for some evensong services, and for all weddings, special services or other civic events where requested. Of note was our contribution to the national effort to 'Ring for The King' on Coronation Day, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023; 22 ringers took part, we provided ringers to surrounding churches, and we also rang the tune for 'God Save The King' in Italian 'concerti' style, a feat believed unique within the UK to the Priory Band.

There are 21 formally recorded members of the band. We have averaged 13 ringers on practice nights and manage to ring 8 or 10 bells on most Sundays. The Priory's new Audio / Visual system is of great benefit to the ringers, allowing for the first time a visual link with the congregation and activities within the church, and enabling everyone to see the bells in action. This has proved very popular on Tower Tour days.

The bellringers' Tower Funds are in healthy credit, due in part to shared fees from 'Tower Tours'. Thanks are due to the ringers who regularly volunteer as guides on these days.

*Helen Normington & Paul Lewis*

### **CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY**

Catherine Ponting stepped down as C&Y administrator at the end of the summer term and as yet no-one has come forward to take on this role. The PCC has been looking at various options including a paid Children and Families worker or a Mission Accompanier.

Junior Choir meets weekly for Friday rehearsals and to sing for the usual Sunday morning services. The core members of the Junior Choir have remained

dedicated although some of the newer members have come and gone due to the pressures of school and exams. We have enjoyed the Choristers' Concert in February and a happy weekend away to Viney Hill in September.

Identity (11-18s) has continued to flourish, with 8-10 choir children attending on a regular basis – we are still working on how to encourage attendance from the non-choir children.

FROGS (under 11s) attendance has varied – some weeks we have had eight or more children. Most of the choir children have now moved up to Identity, so now FROGS focuses on our much younger members. We pray for more families to join us.

*Catherine Ponting & Helen Wall*

## CHURCH MUSIC

Our Choirs, Praise Group, Worship Band, Orchestra and organists continue to lead the music in the Priory with great skill and dedication.

Since January, we have adapted to leading the music for the morning services in Malvern College Chapel. However, the Worship Band found that they could not lead the evening services in the Chancel of the Priory, and so Praise Group stepped in.

The number of children in the Junior Choir continues to be lower than pre-Covid numbers, and remains around 16, with regular attendance of 10-12. A couple of new recruits are hoping to join after Easter.

The Orchestra leads a morning service every couple of months. There has been good attendance, with two children regularly joining to play.

Praise Group sings before every third Sunday morning service of the month, and regularly leads a morning service. This year, it will sing the Maundy Thursday service, and the Priory Singers sang the Ash Wednesday service.

Before the temporary move to Malvern College, the Worship Band led The Gathering, on every first Sunday evening of the month, also leading a morning service every few months.

Normal service will resume once we return to the Priory at Easter.

*Piers Maxim*

## FELLOWSHIP, WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Fellowship, Worship and Prayer – FWP – is our monthly church prayer meeting, held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7.20pm in the Lyttelton Rooms upper hall.

Each evening includes time for prayer for the Priory and our Priory family. Guest speakers and/or leaders from our own congregation have also led us in a wide range of themes for consideration and prayer. In Spring 2023, thinking about our Malvern community included themes of education, The Well, Churches Together in Malvern and Lifepath. A small and very special bring and share in July included prayer for those who are ill. In the Autumn “turn your eyes upon Jesus” included our personal lives, our church community, the Middle East and our outreach. In 2024 we have prayed around “what is the church for” and prayed for people in an informal communion service.

Please do consider coming to these meetings or ask Keith Ponting to send you the email mind map so that you can join in afterwards – about 60 people receive this each month.

We are grateful for the help received from many different people in planning and running the meetings.

*Rosamund Ponting*

## FLOWER ARRANGERS

The Priory flower arrangers team enjoys arranging flowers in the Priory to welcome visitors and to enhance our beautiful building. We are continuing to be as eco - friendly as possible and are replacing the use of floral foam with other mechanics. The Advent ring this year was done without the use of foam and was much admired. We are also trying to use locally grown flowers and we are very grateful to Priory members who provide us with flowers and foliage from their gardens. The team is very small and we are looking for more members.

*Ann Oldfield*

## MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church has had another very encouraging year, with regular families attending, and also new families joining our fun-filled and dynamic afternoons.



These have taken place on seven Sundays in the year, the 8<sup>th</sup> one, our Light Party, being held on October 31<sup>st</sup>, Halloween. The Light Party is a highlight of our year, held in the Priory. We had 60 families in the late afternoon. The church was filled with lights and laughter as families took part in games and learned about the light of Christ always overcoming darkness. A month later we had our Christmas Messy Church – a wonderful gingerbread nativity, masterminded by Philippa. Excited young people created their own nativity scene, as they decorated gingerbread nativity figures with sprinkles. Messy Church is very much alive and well and an important outreach of the Priory. We have a great team, each member using their skills to enable it to take place, and to present the Gospel to families, most of whom would not otherwise come to church. We look forward to 2024 with hope.

*Rosemary Webster*

## PRAYER MINISTRY

Prayer is an important and visible part of Ministry. The prayer station in St Giles' chapel is a place of focused prayer and is frequently visited with weekday morning worship taking place in St Giles'.

The Prayer Vine is an effective vehicle for congregational members to unite in prayer for individual needs. It is administered extremely effectively.

The healing ministry team has not resumed. It was decided that sidespeople will be a point of contact for those who would like prayer, and they will then notify a member of the healing prayer team at that service. This needs to be revisited in terms of communication and its effectiveness.

The daily Prayer Diary is posted on the website and forms part of the Magazine. It suggests prayer for Priory life and prayer for mission partners and wider issues.

A leaflet on Prayer in the Priory is available to inform members of the Priory, and those visiting, of ways in which prayer can be accessed. It acts as guidance to those currently leading intercessions and seeks to encourage members of the congregation to reflect on whether they are called to participate in leading prayer.

*Gilly Maxim*

## **OTHER REPORTS**

### HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Three accidents were recorded during 2023, all of which involved slips or trips: one to a school pupil on the tower steps during Lifepath, one to a volunteer helper on the steps to the choir stalls (also during Lifepath), and one to a member of the congregation on the altar steps. Thankfully, none was serious. Ironically, there were no recorded instances of people tripping or falling over the nave pew plinths - a relatively frequent occurrence in previous years – before granting of a faculty for their removal, partly for safety reasons.

As mentioned in last year's report, a revised Priory Health and Safety Policy was adopted by the PCC. Risk assessments were carried out and recorded for the move to Malvern College Chapel in early 2024 and a Churchyard Nature Count, as well as the usual revision of risk assessments for Lifepath. Risk assessments were recorded by others for the Women's Breakfast in February and the work of the Priory Area Links team (PALS).

Significant work has been undertaken with the Church Manager on a Fire Risk Assessment for the Priory, which has now been completed, as has the work to improve the emergency exit for bellringers.

*Peter Babb*

### CHURCHES TOGETHER IN MALVERN

In October 2023 Geoff Richardson was elected Chair; Becky Elliott remained Vice Chair and James Elliott Treasurer. Geoff outlined his Christian journey from the Exclusive Brethren, his work with Youth Groups, his training to be a church leader and into Bible College and his involvement with Ignite Malvern. During the recent interregnum he led Malvern Evangelical Church.

On Good Friday, a large congregation took part in the service in the Priory grounds. Many arrived having followed a cross from their church. In June there were many different church members involved in Lifepath at the Priory.

In the January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity St Joseph's was packed and representatives from the many churches and projects led the service written by the Christians of Burkino Faso with the theme '*You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself*'. Bishop John gave an encouraging sermon. He spoke of the value of witnessing as CTM to the people of Malvern, whether

through a church project, Christians Against Poverty or from within the community e.g. Food Bank and Malvern Welcomes. During 'unity week' some of us took part in a zoom prayer time introduced by six of our church leaders. It was an opportunity to hear from our new Area Dean, Gary Crellin.

The February meeting was a pancake party hosted by the Lyttelton Well - an opportunity for me to invite people to our Women's Breakfast and World Day of Prayer!

CTM Justice and Peace Group continues to meet in the Lyttelton Rooms for Peace Prayers at midday on 2nd and 4th Mondays. In April it will host its first Open Meeting since the pandemic. Colin Chapman will speak on the theme *Is there any Hope for Peace in Israel/Palestine?*

*Dorothy Knights*

## CHOIRS' ASSOCIATION

2023 was a year full of music that expanded beyond, as well as remaining faithful to, our central purpose of worship. We have the blessing to sing as part of regular worship services at the Priory on a weekly basis. We have enjoyed singing varied pieces across communion, evensong and choral evensong services. We are grateful that Piers chooses a combination of pieces that we know well and that are new to us so that we can continue to enhance services with the beautiful array of music available.

We have also been blessed to continue to support liturgically important services around Lent, Easter, Advent and Christmas.

Music outside of these 'usual' services has included a Come and Sing Evensong, Junior Choir Concert, Evensong at Pershore Abbey, Junior Choir Camp, our annual Choirs' Association Day, an Autumn fundraising concert and a special Coronation Evensong.

The juniors continue to amaze us with their talents during their annual concert, which helps raise funds for their choir camp in the autumn. This again was a great success with activities, food and singing to complement the weekend. These events really do help the junior choir strengthen their relationships with each other.

A special choral evensong was held on the day of the Coronation of King Charles III. This was a wonderful occasion to celebrate this significant event in the country and to sing music by Piers, specially composed for the occasion.

The choir is committed to continuing to use music to worship and hopefully enhance the worship experience of the congregation. We consider ourselves lucky to be able to do so.

*Rebecca McLaverty-Head*

## THE FRIENDS OF MALVERN PRIORY

The Friends made grants to the PCC of £119k for work conserving and monitoring the Creation Window and for the new St. Anne's Chapel roof. The total grants made in 2022 & 2023 - £185k - exceeded the total over the preceding 12 years. A record £13k was also given to the PCC from Shop profits.

Thanks to the team of dedicated and knowledgeable Priory guides, there were 18 pre-booked tours of the Priory for special-interest groups, regular Saturday morning tours and a presence in the church most Thursdays. Peter Babb is the new coordinator.

48 people enjoyed a brilliant Friends' trip to Wells Cathedral in May; thanks go to our organiser, Jane Hill.

In June, Archdeacon Robert Jones rededicated the Creation Window and preached at the Friends' Choral Evensong sung by our talented Priory choir. Leigh Ralphs completed her first year running the Friends' Shop, supported by a dedicated team of volunteers who maintain a welcoming presence in the church. Thanks go to them, Philip Robinson (stocktaking) and Paul Copsey, retiring Shop Treasurer - Karen O'Neill is taking over the role.

A new edition of the Priory Guidebook was published in a larger format with superb new photographs thanks to the expertise of Katherine Little.

In October, Piers Maxim delivered an excellent Heritage & Faith Lecture "*One Thousand Years of Music and Worship at Great Malvern Priory*", illustrated by a group of talented singers. Delicious canapés were enjoyed afterwards.

The Friends' Community Carol service was the best yet thanks to inspiration by Vicar Rod, contributions by members of the Malvern community, the Priory Choir, Bellringers and Handbell Ringers.

Eleven names were added to the Friends' Book of Remembrance.

Thank you to Derek Valentine (Treasurer), Mike Eglington (Secretary) and the Friends' Council for encouragement and support during another successful enjoyable year.

*Anne Eglington*

## TOWER TOURS

Tower tours have been provided on a more regular basis during 2023, with tours at least once a month from April to late November and every Saturday in August. The tours have been very popular, with more than 350 visitors climbing the tower in 2023. Philippa Lowe's excellent posters and the Priory website have greatly helped to advertise the tours.

A particularly popular feature has been the opportunity to visit the Ringing Chamber where members of the Ringers have explained the history and workings of the bells and demonstrated how they are rung, before letting visitors try it for themselves. The new AV system has also allowed the bells to be seen ringing. Two people have joined the Ringing Band after coming on tower tours and takings are shared between the PCC and the Ringers. Special thanks are due to Helen Normington and Paul Lewis, the joint Tower Captains, for facilitating these sessions and arranging for them to be manned.

The provision of a new card machine will make it much easier for us to take the increasingly popular card payments. We hope to run tours on a similar basis in 2024 with a tour on the first Saturday of each month, often coinciding with Priory Welcome Days. We would appreciate having a few more tour guides, so please talk to Peter Babb if you feel you could offer a few hours – it's a very good way to get fit.

*Peter Babb*

## LYTTELTON WELL

The Lyttelton Well has faced another challenging year, especially on the financial front. Simon and Sheila have settled in well and have been joined on the management team by Pauline, as café manager. Together, they have sought to introduce more efficient processes throughout the business in order to reduce costs. As part of this, the café menu was streamlined, which sadly led to some redundancies.

The Well's Counselling Service has gone from strength to strength, under the dynamic leadership of Jo Sessford, but will always struggle to meet the ever-increasing demand. The Service is a real blessing to many people in the Malvern area who could not otherwise afford professional counselling.

The bookshop has reopened in the front part of the café, although it is smaller than it was pre-Covid. We continue to seek God's guidance on how best to take the bookshop forward. We have strengthened our links with Malvern Hills Food Bank, who now have a volunteer on site several times a week.

Our Chairman, Michael Harper, will be stepping down at the AGM in May. We thank him for leading the Lyttelton Well with such good humour and grace through a very difficult period in its history, and for his many years of service as a Trustee.

As ever, we thank all our staff and volunteers for all their hard work throughout the year. If you feel that you might be able to help in our café or bookshop, even for just a few hours a week, you will be made very welcome. We are always grateful for financial donations from our supporters, especially in the form of regular giving. Please contact the Well on (01648) 573702 and speak to Sheila, Simon or Pauline to find out more.

*Richard Weatherill*

## ORGAN RECITALS

ITFA - It's That Floor Again! Unfortunately only three of our normal five recitals have been possible because of the work on the nave floor but a total audience of 460 enjoyed three recitals including one by a German organist, raising £1,500 for the Priory.

Having organised the recitals for 19 years I have decided to retire and pass on the task to a very able team to carry on the work and a wonderful programme is planned for the coming years. In the last 19 years we have had 96 recitals from 25 organists including nine from five countries in Europe, Australasia and North America. Almost £27,000 has been raised for the Priory.

*Geoff Fearnehough*