

The 2023 – 2024 Annual Report of the Church Council For the Parish of St. James the Great Syresham



1. Worship: We have enjoyed special services with many more in attendance. We particularly enjoyed our joint services with the chapel these were a Coronation Celebration, Remembrance, Carols by Candlelight and Mothering Sunday.

We don't have any children at normal Sunday services but enjoy welcoming five families to our quarterly Messy Church sessions. A joint church and chapel group also run a school lunch time club where we entertain up to 24 children – especially if food is involved!

We now have a regular Time To Pray on a Thursday morning. Otherwise our service pattern has remained the same with two communions a month, one morning prayer and Praise and Prayer where we have looked at topics such as St David, St Paul and the work of Charlie Mackesy as well as celebrating Pentecost, our Patronal festival and Palm Sunday.

2. SCC Syresham



Church Council met in

June, October, November, January & April.

We continue to support our school, plan fundraising and special services such as Harvest, discuss building works & finances and receive reports from our Friends and Trusts groups. Current members of the SCC are:

Alice Palmer (Chair & BPC rep)
Brenda Faragher (Treasurer)
Kathleen Brunning (Minutes Secretary & Pastoral rep)
Sallie Connery (Trust rep. Hammond Fund manager)
Margaret Miller (Friends rep & Giftaid)
David Wright (Hammond fund rep)

David Billingham is our Electoral Roll Officer.

3. Building works. We have been busy raising money for our church Steeple. Repairs will cost over £80,000. We now have enough to cover the cost, but some of this comes in the form of a loan. Unfortunately the builders are finding it difficult to source suitable shingles so it looks as though the work will not be done until the autumn. Other Quinquennial works have been completed but we will leave the final group until the steeple work is finished.

4. Church Helpers

We are forever grateful to the church members who help us to run the church by cleaning, decorating with flowers, reading in services, leading intercessions, serving coffee, leading services, playing the organ, ringing bells, lighting candles, setting up for services and welcoming folk coming to worship – it wouldn't work without you. It is wonderful to have welcomed two new members to the rotas this year. Also Nicola and David have done sterling work upgrading our children's area, coffee corner and church noticeboard.

5. Churchyard Working Party

Our CWP of around 15 good folk have worked hard on the first Saturday of each month to improve and maintain the churchyard. We now have some wild areas and a bug hotel. The Parish Council handed responsibility for the new churchyard back to us so there is plenty to do. We are awaiting the removal of a large self-seeded sycamore tree – once the tree surgeons finger has mended. We also thank our mowers who keep the grass around the church under control.

6. Friends of St James The committee have arranged a Quiz, Walks, Pancake Lunch and the 200club this year alongside Christmas and summer parties. We are looking forward to a Safari supper in June. Membership has grown slightly and we have a new member on the Committee. They have pledged £4000 towards our Steeple Fund. We give grateful thanks to Antoinette and all the team.

7. Fundraising: We enjoyed the Note-Ability concert in July. Our Fete in September turned out to be the hottest day of the year, and the Christmas Fair on the coldest day. This meant our total fundraising raised less than £2000, which was very disappointing. We are joining with other village organizations in June for a Village Celebration, which will include the church fete. We hope this will result in better advertising and more footfall. We are falling short of paying our full parish share and need to find ways of increasing our regular giving and fund raising.

8. Trusts: The Madge and Maud Payne trusts have continued to support us with our maintenance work. With the help of Brian Miller, our lead trustee, we have re-organized the investments to make clearer the difference between income, which we can use for church maintenance, and capital growth, which we cannot touch. The Hammond Trust enables us to deliver plants or hampers to folk at Christmas time and buy bibles and books for the school children.

9. The Bell Tower: We enjoy having our Bells rung to welcome folk to special services. Many thanks to Andrew North for leading the tower - also for doing a lot of cleaning with his trusty helpers. We look forward to celebrating the 400th birthday of some of our bells in June.

10. Our thanks: To Paul Stothard, Rev John Roberts, Rev David Bell and Rev Will Adams for leading our services through the interregnum and to Rev Hugh as he leads us into the future.

Alice Palmer

Church Representative on the BPC

