June 2024

Report to Tysoe Parish Council APCM from St Mary`s Church.

The past year at St Mary`s has been one of many and varied events.

During the year Rev George took time to refresh his ministry with a period of reflection and renewal in Northumberland, following the steps of St Cuthbert. Clergy are encouraged to take a Sabbatical and Rev George`s had been delayed due to covid. Whilst he was away Rev Heather Parbury and visiting clergy looked after the Parish, supported by church members.

The King`s Coronation in May was keenly anticipated, and the Church celebrated with a special service where bells played a huge role. We are very lucky to have an amazing bell ringing team in Tysoe, trained and encouraged by David Bell, the aptly named tower captain. Many new volunteers came forward under his tutorship and have produced a very competent Team. Sadly David and wife Jackie have recently moved to pastures new , but we are very fortunate to have another David, David Rake, who has stepped into his shoes.

The Churches progress towards being recognised as an eco- Church took a step forward when it received a bronze award, as the Church changed some of its practices towards more eco -friendly products eg less use of oasis in flower arranging and use of eco-friendly cleaning products. There were also changes in the management of the Church yard where areas were set apart as wildflower areas encouraging insects and biodiversity. We are fortunate to have the expertise of Dr Rosemary Collier on hand to advise and guide us. We were also very fortunate to have another amazing Children`s Farming Activity week in August, thoughtfully and skilfully produced under the direction of Shirley Cherry and her Team. 30 children enjoyed a week of exploration about soil, seeds, manure, flour, eggs, bread production and of course lots of lovely animals around the Parish. Many thanks to all the local farmers and producers who took time out to assist, and of course the team of volunteers who made it all happen.

During the year there were 2 weddings at the Church, always a time for celebration. School services also returned to the Church, following the lifting of all covid restrictions. It was great to have the children back in Church for their Christmas, Easter, Harvest and Leavers services. As a Church of England School, the church has close ties with the Church. Rev George makes regular visits. A Foundation governor sits on the School Governors as a Church representative. Last year this was Jackie Bell, who has now moved nearer to family in Yorkshire. We are grateful to Linda Synge from Oxhill, who has taken over this role.

Our monthly coffee mornings have continued to flourish with many parents and carers joining us with their toddlers thanks to the social network skills of Amy Hollingham. It is always a very jolly time as the generations mix. The Church is open every day, thanks to a Team of opening and closing volunteers. There is always an opportunity for folk just to pop in for a quiet moment of reflection. Or to bring a donation for the Shipston Food bank box at the back of the Church.

The event held in the Church to support Ukraine in October was a sell-out! Anton Lesser, David Brown and Maddy entertained us with music, song and readings. With wonderful refreshments as well, it was an excellent evening, raising over £3,000 towards an ambulance for Ukraine, which was delivered soon after the event. Thanks to Chris Locke, Jane Ridgway, Jenny Tongue and the Team for all their efforts.

Our Christmas Fair in December saw £1000 raised for Crisis at Christmas Charity and another £400 for Macmillan Cancer. The Christmas services were well attended - the Crib service for children on Christmas eve was particularly enjoyed as it involved chocolate!

We are very grateful to the continuing support of the Parish Council, recently enabling us to make repairs to the Church clock, another wonderful village asset.

Services at St Mary`s happen because of the time given by a large group of volunteers. Flower arrangers, cleaners, bell ringers, coffee and cake providers, sidesmen to name but a few and of course the PCC and Rev George keep everything running smoothly. The last few years have seen a large amount of money spent on restoration of the Church buildings and fabric. We are very fortunate to have one of the few warm church buildings in the area, because of investment in a robust heating system a few years ago. That is why the Church continues to be used year-round as a place to worship and also a place of comfort and celebration, as it has done for many generations past. The church has seen many changes over its 1000-year history, but it remains a symbol of continuity and peace at the heart of the village. The PCC – Parochial Church Council- has the responsibility of maintaining this building. We are about to relaunch our current Parish Giving Scheme and we are hoping that more residents will consider making a small monthly gift to keep our village church open. We are committed to keeping St Mary`s open to anyone who wants to come in and find peace, quiet and rest in an uncertain world.

Gill Roache - member Tysoe PCC