

**ST MARY'S RIVERHEAD WITH DUNTON GREEN
VICAR'S REPORT, APCM 2016**

I am so grateful to everyone who takes part in the life of St Mary's in whatever way they are able. No matter how great or small you feel your contribution is, please be assured that it is always valued. Even if you participate simply by attending our services from time to time, your being here with us makes an enormous difference to who we are and the way we go about things. There are, of course, dozens I really should thank individually for everything they have done for St Mary's over the past year. However, the other report-writers, I know, will be thanking people for their contribution in whatever it is they have had a gracious hand in. And I gladly endorse them. Thank you all.

I would, however, like to make special mention and thank those hardy souls with whom I generally have day-to-day contact (sometimes many times during a day): John Curtis, Diane Williams and Margaret Nicholas.

If anyone is thinking that, perhaps, they might consider taking on the role of churchwarden in the future, please let me know, and we can discuss it. I would be happy for people to come along to PCC and/or Standing Committee meetings as an observer, so they can see what is involved at first hand. Similarly, we will be losing a number of valued members of our PCC next year as their term of office is up, so please do think and pray about whether you might put yourself forward and help us steer the ship.

The other reports given at the APCM have identified so much of the work and energy that has gone into the running of St Mary's over the year. Huge thanks to both those who are responsible for such roles, teams and key church matters, and to everyone mentioned in those reports.

There are many things we can be grateful for. The Parish report notes many of those highlights over the past year. One thing we did look long and hard at over the course of the year was the possibility of funding a Youth Worker. In the event, your PCC decided that perhaps that is something we could consider at some point in the future. Instead, we will hopefully be putting together a service or two favouring those young people of St Mary's who no longer attend Sunday School. We are also planning to create some kind of break-out area for people of secondary school age - but that depends on a number of factors.

Sunday School, meanwhile, has continued to grow from strength to strength. I am incredibly grateful to the leaders, parents and helpers who make Sunday mornings something that our younger members of church enjoy and, by all accounts, look forward to each week. Please be assured of our love and prayers in this key part of the life and work of St Mary's.

As for the future? Well, our new organ should hopefully be in place by the end of the month. We are considering a series of events and celebrations over the year to make full use of it. Principally, though, I should like to offer a word of support and encouragement to you all. The leadership team are delighted that people of all ages and backgrounds are increasingly finding St Mary's a place of welcome, fellowship and community in Christ. That is our whole purpose. One might almost say it is our mission statement.

However, it is not enough simply to mean well and to do what we can to make people feel welcome and valued whenever they come. We - all of us - are continually learning - and always will do. Also, nothing stays the same forever; everything changes. So, it is important to be constantly alert to people's needs, to understand them, and wherever possible to respond to them.

To that end, in the weeks leading up to Easter, on behalf of the PCC, Daphne Harrison kindly conducted a simple survey of the congregation. It is hoped that this will provide a snapshot of where we are as a church and as a key resource within the community. We also hope it will provide some indicators as to where we might take St Mary's both in the immediate and the medium-term future. We haven't opened the box of responses, at the time of writing, but will do shortly. Then your PCC and

leadership team will discuss its contents and develop some ideas as to the way forward for St Mary's - always bearing in mind the roots and heritage of this wonderful church and community.

In the meantime, we simply cannot function without the help of all those I, and all the other report-writers, thank from the bottom of our hearts. And we certainly won't be able to go forward from here without the help, support and hands-on assistance of everyone, especially those who we might call the next generation. So, a special plea to every member of our church family new and not-so-new. Please do offer yourselves in some way. You would be more than welcome, and will find it a fascinating and fulfilling thing to take a role in a place that means so much to so many people. Please think and pray over the next few weeks about getting involved and then let us know. Let it be your Easter Resolution: to participate in some way, no matter how small, in keeping your church the lively and welcoming place it has always been.

Finally, once again, Maggie and I thank everyone for their love, support and encouragement over the year. You have done so much for us as we continue to share this amazing journey. May God bless you all as you continue to find ways of following your individual calling as followers of Christ and finding new ways of participating in the life and worship of His church here in Riverhead with Dunton Green.

In His Name. Amen