

CENTREPIECE

April—May 2024



The Paschal Candle alight
Photo by Paul Milgate-Scarrott

Too Many Bishops?

St Mary's Festival—Weaving Dreams

R.I.P. Mary Riley (Matthews)

Stand up and be Counted



The Collegiate
Church of

Saint ⊕ Mary
in Stafford

Stafford Churches

Saint Chad : Collegiate Church of Saint Mary : Saint Leonard

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For Baptisms and Weddings: Please contact the Parish Administrator

Limited office opening hours,
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SERVICES IN STAFFORD CHURCHES

Usual weekly services

The three Parishes Eucharist on Sundays

8.30am at Saint Chads

10.00am at Saint Mary's

Tuesdays at noon in St Mary's

Wednesdays at 11.00am in St Chad's

Fridays at noon in St Chad's

First Sunday of the month at 10.00: a service at Saint Leonard's, Marston

There is a weekly newssheet sent out by email. If you are not receiving this and would like to, please contact the Parish Office

From the Editors



Well we have another packed Centrepiece for you this month. Hope you enjoy it.

On a sad note we learned that we had lost one of our well loved church members at the grand age of 102. We knew her as Mary Matthews. She was very supportive to us when we took on the role of editing Centrepiece: full of encouragement and constructive criticism. Because so many of you will remember her we have printed her eulogy in order to share something of her long and interesting life.

We received a lovely letter from one of our readers this month which is printed overleaf. If any of you would like to share news and views please email us on the address below.

Steve and Dee Turner

steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk



The Rambling Rector

Round the gardens with the rambling Rector

Two gardens, one question. Saint John, in his gospel, records that when the soldiers came at night to arrest Jesus they were not sure what sort of person they were looking for. Jesus asked them 'Whom do you seek?' The soldiers have a name, 'Jesus of Nazareth', but nothing more, so Jesus has to identify himself.

A few days later, after the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. This was not at night, it was early in the morning just as light was appearing. Mary found the tomb empty. In her confusion she did not recognise Jesus. John once again records the question which Jesus asked. 'Whom do you seek?'. The question is exactly the same. The soldiers, confidently representing the temple and secular authority are not sure what they are expecting. Mary, in her confusion and distress is equally unsure.



The Easter question which Jesus asked of the soldiers and of Mary is the question asked of us, of the people we know and love, of people in the news, of people we know and find it difficult to love, people who are looking, people who think they have found everything. Whether strutting around arrogantly in the darkness like the temple guard, or flailing around in grief like Mary as the light dawns. The question is 'whom do you seek?'

Letter to the Editors

We were surprised and very pleased to receive this letter from Paul Srinivasan whom many of you will remember as a regular at St Marys. He gave us permission to share it with you. Thank you Paul.

Hello Dee & Steve,

Recently we exchanged messages on Facebook re: the latest issue of Centrepiece.

I want you to know that I am a staunch supporter of the magazine and have a long-standing affection for Centrepiece. This dates back to 2005 when the magazine was about to be killed off by the then decision makers. A few of us fought against the odds and won a reprieve for the magazine. A little bit of background history may be helpful here.

Up until that time, Centrepiece was being sold for 50p and yet the church was losing money. People were not interested to buy the magazine and hence its uptake was poor.

Fortunately, the then rector Fr Phillip had time to listen to those of us who wanted the publication to continue. In early 2006, a 'cost-neutral' business plan was produced and accepted. It was argued that, if the magazine were to communicate effectively and to connect with everyone, it should become a free issue and the requirement of having to opt-in (to buy a copy) was removed. Those who wished could still donate, but our idea was to develop advertising income and make it cost neutral. While waiting for advertisements to pick up, we decided to minimise production costs by doing everything ourselves.

Thus, we started a period when the magazine was printed at home. Someone donated a (monochrome) laser printer for this purpose. I fondly recall stalwarts like Norman Day and Betty Chaddock giving up their evenings to collate and staple 200 copies of the magazine. The magazine was then given out free to the church members and the visitors alike. On occasions a second run of home printing was required when the first print of 200 copies ran out. Look at Centrepiece now! Each issue is full of vibrant colours and captivating articles. The contents are a good representation of the life of the church and its place in the heart of the community. One can truly say that the Centrepiece is an important part of the church's outreach ministry.

Steve and Dee, you are doing a wonderful job and God bless you.

Regards,
Paul

Children Prepare for Easter

From Pauline Roycroft

On Good Friday this year some ten or so children spent the morning in St. Mary's. Their ages ranged from toddlers to teens; some came independently, some came with carers, parents or grandparents.

They came to take part in crafts, stories and songs based on the theme of Holy Week. There were egg-shaped decorations telling the story of Holy Week.

Some children made palms decorated with tissue paper. There were chalice-shaped biscuits to decorate as a reminder of the Last Supper. For Good Friday there were crosses to decorate as well as a scene of the "green hill far away without a city wall". For Easter Day children could make an Easter card which showed how the rolling away of a stone revealed that Jesus was risen.



Chalice shaped biscuits decorated by children

Fr Richard led a worship session telling the story of Holy Week; this gave everyone the opportunity to show the crafts they'd made. We also sang some songs including "We have a king who rides a donkey" and "Jesus' love is very wonderful" – this gave a chance to include some actions!

After all this we finished with some light refreshments and of course everyone got to take home a little basket of mini eggs ready for Easter Sunday. All in all, a very pleasant morning giving children the opportunity to explore some ideas of the Easter story.

You might like to look out for this Easter Garden which some of the youngsters made. It will remain in church for the next few weeks.



Smile for the Camera

You may have noticed a security camera by the door of the church. This has been donated by Churchwarden Paul Milgate-Scarrott. Sadly with the way the world is now he felt it was the best way to go, both for everyone's personal safety and also to help protect the building 24 hours a day.

So smile as you wave good bye.

Paul Milgate-Scarrott

Mary Riley (Matthews)

The Funeral Eucharist of Mary Riley (also known as Matthews) took place at St Mary's Church on Thursday 15th February. She was married to Desmond Matthews but retained her first married name as this is how she was known in the world of town and country planning. Eulogies were given on her life by Preb. Graham Fowell, former Rector of St Mary's, who spoke about her life generally and by Anne Parkhill as a former work colleague, who spoke about her career in the world of town and country planning

Mary Preb. Graham Fowell

I feel privileged to have been nominated by Mary to deliver the eulogy at this service. Privileged but daunted. For we are here to remember and celebrate the life of a truly remarkable woman. Remarkable in her gifts and character, her generosity, good humour, integrity. Remarkable in all that she achieved in her long life.

Underlying all that Mary was, there was a strong and enduring faith in God. The God known in Our Lord Jesus Christ and celebrated in the life and worship of the Church of England.

Mary was born in Liverpool on 4th July 1922, to parents Tom and Edith Burns. Tom was a purser on the SS London Pacific sailing out of Liverpool across the Atlantic including the extremely hazardous journey during the war. Mary loved her parents and younger sister Pauline and was close to them. When Pauline moved to Stafford to be with Mary they became close again. They shared their life of faith together when Mary and Desmond transferred from St Bertelin's to St Mary's and benefitted from a joint pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the early 1980s. After Pauline's illness Mary became her great support and helper, visiting her everyday at St Joseph nursing home. Mary was deeply bereft at the death of a lifelong companion in 2009.

One of the most complete and moving eulogies I ever heard was Mary's for Pauline at her funeral here at St Marys. Mary spoke movingly and eloquently for twelve minutes without a note. It came from the heart.

At the age of six Mary was taken by her piano teacher to a recital in St Georges Hall, Liverpool, by the composer Serge Rachmaninov. After the concert she met with the great man. She always treasured the memory and kept alive a great love of music and the arts. A radio tuned to Radio 3 was always at her side. Choral Evensong on Wednesday was unmissable.

Mary remembered being shocked and horrified by the Liverpool Blitz. I always thought that Liverpool remained a part of Mary. It was a city characterised by great divides of poverty and wealth but also radical and progressive in its politics. Mary was influenced by that and it remained with her. She was progressive in her outlook upon the world. She longed for a fairer and more equal and just society.

Mary's Christian faith was nurtured at St Mary the Virgin, West Darby, one of the great parish churches of the North. Characterised by Eucharistic and Liturgical worship with good music and fine preaching, St Mary's stood within that Catholic Anglican tradition that we call the Kingdom of God on earth movement. A movement from the late 19th and mid 20th century Anglicanism associated with William Temple.

and Charles Gore. A strong ethical understanding of the Gospel looking for the Kingdom of God's justice and righteousness on earth as in heaven.

A teaching which strongly resembles the Catholic Social teaching of the Common Good. It was a practical faith to be lived in the world as it is. Whilst longing for a world that could be. That shaped and formed Mary's whole life as a Christian.

Mary's concern for a better world wasn't just Utopian or theoretical and held at a distance, she was ready to meet all kinds of needs in family and among her friends. She offered many people a lift up in life. She generously supported a whole range of charities: Animal charities and the BRC as well as responding to world needs as they arose.

After Holly Lodge Grammar School in Liverpool, Mary's choice of university was the radical and progressive London School of Economics The LSE. Founded by Beatrice and Sydney Webb together with George Bernard Shaw. Beatrice Webb was a radical and progressive sociologist and economist. A socialist who worked for the equal status of women—that was Mary to a tee. The kingdom of God on earth might have been Mary's watchword. The students were encouraged to be original creative—Mary studied geography.

After graduation in 1943 there followed a time in Scotland in specialist war work and where she complained of the cold. When it came to career choice very characteristically Mary chose public service in town planning. Her friend and colleague Ann Parkhill is to share with us her reflections upon Mary career.

That work brought her to Stafford and marriage to Dennis Riley. She loved him dearly they were very close. Sadly Dennis suffered from a degenerative illness until his death. Mary nursed him throughout all of that whilst holding down the responsibility of her work a chief county planning officer.

Mary and Desmond met at St Bertelin's where Mary had worshipped since arriving at Stafford. They found each other later in life and were married at 8.30 on a Saturday morning with priest and two witnesses present. Theirs was a happy partnership of companionship, care for each other and shared humour. 'I love her' Desmond would say. Mary didn't respond except with a broad smile. 'I love you', it said.

They each had their own interests but they shared those interests with each other to the enrichment of both. Desmond enjoyed sailing on the South Coast with his small yacht and an apartment in Sutton Harbour, Plymouth. Mary loved the fells of the Lake District walking and the mountains. They shared an apartment at Grasmere looking out on to the Fells.

They both loved good food and would travel miles to a good restaurant especially the pilgrimage two or three times a year to Curry Mile in Birmingham. Desmond is a connoisseur of Indian food. They were generous in sharing those trips with some of us.

Of course they sparred with each other in a light hearted way, for in some ways they were different. Desmond read the Financial Times and thought it the Bible. Mary read the Guardian and thought the same.

One of the very happy occasions I remember was when they celebrated the 21st anniversary of their marriage. It was a lovely and happy occasion—kept in case they didn't make it to the 25th. Which they did of course with flying colours.

Mary and Desmond shared their home with various cats: Marmalade and latterly Christmas who adopted them on Christmas Eve six years ago. Also a family of Badgers who every night would find their way to the best eating place in town for Badgers - overseen by Mary and Desmond. What was so important to them was that they stayed together in their home for as long as it was possible, which with the assistance of good friends and carers they did. It hasn't always been easy.

Mary has had some serious health issues including the sudden loss of sight in one eye, and a long recovery from a painful accident in the Lake District. And breaking her hip 2020. But strength of character and determination saw her through.

Mary was a Christian who loved and served her Lord and his church for the sake of the world. We saw that in the regular sharing of worship here at St Mary's without fail whilst she could. The friendships that she made here with St Marys people. She served in the PCC and the DCC. She attended Parish days and weekends. She attended social events. She was generous in her financial giving – very generous.

To a catalogue of Rectors and curates she was a true friend and counsellor Always a source of wisdom and experience. Always with her heart in the right place always fully engaged with what was happening here at St Marys. She supported the work of the John Young foundation.

I had the privilege to claim her and value her as my best critical friend. And now although it hardly seems possible she is no longer with us. Mary we thank God for your long and full life.

Reflections upon Mary's Career

Anne Parkhill

I first met Mary in the 1960s when I was appointed as a town planning assistant in the County Planning and Development Department in Stafford. Mary was then in charge of the Department's Research Section. The County Council was at that time wholly responsible for all aspects of town and country planning in Staffordshire apart from the areas covered by the then unitary authorities of Stoke and Burton.

But let me take you back in time. Mary was born in Liverpool on 4th July 1922. She attended Holly Lodge Grammar School in Liverpool. Her education was interrupted for a short time by the outbreak of World War II when pupils, including Mary and her younger sister Pauline, were evacuated to Howells School in Denbighshire, North

Wales. Mary described her school record as "good but not outstanding" until that is in her final year in the Sixth Form when she was awarded a scholarship to the London School of Economics (LSE) to read Geography. At the outbreak of the Second World War LSE had relocated to Cambridge. Mary graduated with a BA degree in 1943.

Being wartime, Mary found herself called up for service at the age of 21 along with

six other graduates from LSE and Cambridge to work in what was described as the Scientific Reserve, an elite section of the Civil Service. It is clear that Mary's brilliance of mind was already being recognised. But, as she hastened to tell me, she was not in the exciting field of spies and secret agents. Rather, her assignment was to St Andrew's House in Edinburgh, the HQ of the Scottish Civil Service where she joined a team of social and economic planners tasked with developing plans for peacetime reconstruction. Her memory of this time was of the intense cold of Edinburgh in wintertime. This manifested itself post war when Mary made sure that visitors to her home were always welcomed by warm fires.

Having requested a move back to England, Mary was posted to Birmingham. In post-war recruitment she applied for a permanent establishment post in the Civil Service and came third in the nation-wide competition. She was appointed to the post of Assistant Research Officer in the Birmingham Office specialising in population and economics. You will appreciate that this was an important achievement as not only was she competing with men returning from the armed forces but it was rare for women to achieve high posts in the Civil Service in the 1940s. It was very much a man's world!

And so it was that Mary saw the advertisement for the post of Assistant County Planning and Development Officer for Staffordshire. She applied and was appointed to the post in 1949 heading up the Department's Research Section. And so began Mary's career in town and country planning in the County which was to span the next 34 years.

Mary was at the forefront of town and country planning in Staffordshire in the 1960s and 70s when the population of the County soared through a combination of natural growth and the movement of people into the County from the adjoining West Midlands urban areas of Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall. It was the era of house-building on a large scale to accommodate this growth in the towns and villages of the County bringing with it the demand for jobs, improved transport and shopping facilities, education, health and other community services.

Mary's forte was in the field of strategic planning to which she applied her brilliant mind honed in her years of wartime service. Former colleagues would agree with me that you rarely questioned her instructions – to quote Rumpole of the Bailey, it was a case of “she who must be obeyed”. In 1973 Mary was appointed to the post of County Planning and Development Officer for Staffordshire, the first woman to hold a position at this level in the UK. This was a time of great change with planning powers being devolved to the emerging new District Councils. County Planning Authorities were required to prepare a strategic framework of planning policies and proposals for the distribution of housing and employment developments for the next 10 – 20 years to guide the new District Planning Authorities in the preparation of their local plans. Preparing such guidance involved negotiating with each of the District Councils in the County, the adjoining Councils in the West Midlands Region and with Government Departments. It called for the person in charge to have a cool head, a quick mind and a sharp intellect. Mary had all these qualities.

Safeguarding the County's Green Belts from the pressures for housing and other developments was all-important, and this is where Mary excelled, giving evidence at major public inquiries including the Examination in Public of the Staffordshire County Structure Plan in 1974, the first such Plan to be prepared and examined in this way in England & Wales. A former colleague told me that Mary admitted that at times of great stress when she was preparing to give evidence for lengthy periods of time, she found the occasional G&T very helpful! There was also another side to Mary. She was kind and considerate to members of her staff in times of personal crisis cutting through red tape that would otherwise have delayed matters. I speak from personal experience when my parents were seriously injured in a car crash in Northern Ireland and I needed to be at their bedside; and later, when my mother was dying from cancer.

Mary retired in 1983, but continued to maintain her interest in town and country planning as a member, Chairman and Vice President of the Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA); and as a member of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, formerly known as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE). The ethos of both these groups in seeking to make this country a better place for people to live and thrive and to protect its open countryside lay at the heart of Mary's thinking on planning matters.

Thank you Mary for the public service that you rendered to your country and to Staffordshire over the years and for being a good friend and mentor to me throughout my career in the world of town and country planning.

St Mary's Festival: Weaving Dreams **Saturday 22nd June – Sunday 7th July 2024**

Last year we had a very successful inaugural festival: a celebration of musical, literary and visual arts, welcoming around a thousand people over the course of the week to events including chamber concerts, organ recitals, folk singers, and sharing cultures from those forced to flee their homelands. We were also able to host Bread Church for local charity House of Bread.

We are now planning our second St Mary's Festival which will run from Saturday 22nd June until Sunday 7th July 2024.

We are pleased to be working with a number of local partners to present a varied programme of entertainment, exhibitions and workshops. There will be opportunities to share food and drink and to worship in our historic church building.

Musical performances will be provided at lunchtimes and in the evenings. We will be welcoming musicians well-known in the local area and performers with a national reputation. Talks and workshops for all ages based around the festival theme of Joseph and his coat of many colours, will take place at other times. There will be displays of art works and photography around the church



daytime events will be provided free of charge, although we will welcome donations to help defray costs. Evening events will be ticketed. We hope to be able to support our chosen Festival Charities: “Farming Community Network” and “World Land Trust”.

The spectacular coat for Joseph has been created by the congregations and visitors of Stafford Churches. Each patch has been wonderfully and uniquely made (rather like each one of us). When pieced together they make an interesting kaleidoscope of colour which will be used as a visual reminder, during the Arts Festival, of the Old Testament story of Joseph.

Ruth Duffy

Sponsorship

If you would like to work with us to support our vision, you can consider sponsorship in one of the following ways:

General Sponsorship costs £100. Your organisation’s name on publicity for the Festival. This will help to cover general costs.

Concert Patron costs £250 or £500. Your organisation will sponsor a specific event and that would be acknowledged on the publicity for that event. You would receive a number of tickets for that event.

Festival Patron costs £1000. The festival is held in association with you and/ or your organisation, along with a number of tickets for all ticketed events.

We are happy to discuss any specific, personal or anonymous donations you want to offer.

If you would like more details regarding this, please e-mail the Parish Office: parishoffice@stmarysstafford.org.uk and mark it for the attention of Dan Savage.

Cheques should be made payable to *The PCC of St Mary’s Stafford*.
Bacs transfer: *The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stafford St Mary*,
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Our Strand of 7.30 pm Evening Concerts includes:

Saturday 22 June: **Opening Concert** with **Fish From Oblivion** – Weaving Dreams

Sunday 23 June 6.30pm: **Come and Sing Evensong** with afternoon rehearsal

Monday 24 June: **Jackie Oates Trio** – international folk singer with a Stafford connection - <https://thenestcollective.co.uk/artists/jackie-oates/>

Wednesday 26 June: **VocaBella** and **Men from the Off**
https://www.facebook.com/totallyacappella/?locale=en_GB

Friday 28 June: **Carol Ann Duffy** – former Poet Laureate and Stafford resident <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/carol-ann-duffy>

Saturday 29 June: **Melismata** Choir - performing **Master Byrd**, a celebration of the life and work of William Byrd <https://www.melismatachoir.com/performances>

Thursday 4 July: **Jenny Jones** violin; **John Savage** piano

Saturday 6 July pm: Schools, choirs and community performance of **Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat**

Saturday 6 July evening: **Dvorak Piano Quintet** performed by students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Our **Chamber Music Strand** includes young performers, returning favourites Manchester Reed Trio, recitals with lute, organs, piano, voice and strings, offered as free lunchtime and coffee concerts and ticketed evening events.

There will be several **exhibitions** including art, craft and photography related to the story of Joseph in St Mary's throughout the Festival. Our theme will also be explored through strands of **worship, poetry and participatory workshops and dialogues** with **schools and community involvement**.

Bookings open in **late April**, when our full programme will be available. Why not set aside the time now if you're local to Stafford, or plan a visit or invite friends for a long weekend?

Visit us on the [StaffordChurches.uk](https://www.staffordchurches.uk) Facebook page or <https://www.stmarysstafford.org.uk/new-events-1>

We very much look forward to seeing you many times over the two-week Festival.

**With our very best wishes
The Festival Committee**

Too Many Bishops?

Fr Richard Grigson

Adapted from an address given on Saint Chad's Day, 2nd March 2024.

Jesus said:

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by people.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before people, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Sometimes there can be a problem with bishops, especially when there are too many of them. The problem is even worse when there are too many bishops in Yorkshire, or more accurately too many bishops in York. When a disease has swept the country, dividing and enfeebling communities, weakening the church, and the church itself has turned inward discussing and getting very worked up about differing customs and practices. Then the last thing you need is too many bishops cluttering up the place.

The year, by the way, is AD664. 1360 years ago this year. The plague had devastated church and society alike and had (as these things do) caused a vacancy for a bishop of the Northumbrians in York. In those days bishops were missionary bishops, not administrative bishops, so the lack of a bishop was important. After due process a priest called Wilfred was appointed. Wilfred was a big noise in that part of the world, having studied widely across Europe, but he was an argumentative soul. When he was appointed bishop he wanted to make sure that his ordination was correct, so he travelled to Gaul, in modern day France.

Wilfred was gone a long time, so long that some people thought he was never coming back. Delays getting into England from Europe are evidently nothing new. The king despaired of Wilfred ever returning so he appointed one of four brothers, called Chad, to be bishop instead. Chad was, at that time, happily abbot of the monastery of Lastingham, in modern day Yorkshire. Chad set off to Canterbury to be ordained bishop, but discovered that the supposed Archbishop was in fact dead. He eventually found a bishop, was ordained, and returned to York.

All went well with Chad, until Wilfred turned up once again to ask who had been sitting in his episcopal chair. That was the point which there were too many bishops in York. Chad was ordered to stand aside, which he did impressing the then archbishop of Canterbury (a live archbishop had been

appointed by this time) by his humility.

Chad returned to Lichfield until called out of retirement to be bishop of Mercia. Mercia is our part of the world, the modern day midlands. He moved the seat of the bishops from Repton (who needs a bishop in Repton?) to Lichfield. From Lichfield he toured, on foot, refusing gifts of a horse, as missionary bishop of the Mercians "in the manner of the ancient fathers and in great perfection of life".

So much for the church in the 7th Century. What do we take away today when the church of Jesus Christ is still reeling from a modern day plague. What can we offer today when community often seeks division, not diversity. What does a church in Stafford town centre, under the prayerful watch of Chad have to give to the community?

First, discussion and debate is good. Wilfred and Chad had debated many issues. They had to listen to each other, even if they disagreed. At local, national and international level we often don't stop to listen to each other, preferring to shout each other down, bleating the blatantly untrue and refusing to listen.

Second, authority is good. Someone had to resolve the situation in York between Chad and Wilfred. And someone had to accept that they would have to step aside. Authority, exercised clearly and lovingly, with a concern for the more than short term popularity is good.

In the church, mission and evangelism is good and right. We are called to be a community of evangelists, people of the Good News of Jesus.

Saint Chad, pray for us

For the courage to disagree in humility, and so find unity

For the renewal of God's people

For the peace of Gods world

To be light and salt today.

Dates for next
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A Report from St Mary's One World Group



This spring we sent a donation of £700 to Hospice Care Kenya. This was raised from donations given since we began supporting the charity in October 2023.

The £700 was gratefully received by HCK, and they sent us a “thank-you” card in acknowledgement. This card, together with the latest newsletter is displayed on the One World Group noticeboard along with information about how the money raised is used to help people in Kenya suffering from terminal or life-limiting illnesses. Thank you to everyone who supports Hospice Care Kenya.

We are continuing to support this charity; if you are able to make a donation, envelopes are available in St. Mary's and can be left in the wooden donation box or on the collection plate on a Sunday.

*Cheques payable to **St. Mary's Church Stafford.***

A card reader is available in St. Mary's

To pay direct to St. Mary's bank use these details:

*Account name: **The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stafford St. Mary***

*Ref: **HCK***

*No: **00032434***

*Sort Code: **40 52 40***

For further details of the work of Hospice Care Kenya, visit the website: [Hospice Care Kenya Charity](https://www.hospicecarekenya.org.uk/)

Christian Food Help: “Food donated by the people of Stafford, for the people of Stafford”

In 2023 Christian Food Help Stafford delivered the highest number of meals delivered in any year so far since 2012. Thank you to everyone who contributes, your donations are much appreciated. Please continue to help if you can; tinned food and long-life milk can be left in the boxes in St. Chad's and St. Mary's.

House of Bread works with refugees moving from hostels into independent accommodation. Many of these people need help setting themselves up in their new homes. Could you help by donating any bedding or items of kitchenware? These can be left in the boxes at the back of St. Mary's.



Thank you to everyone who's made donations to our two local charities during Lent. These will be delivered shortly after Easter.

R N Clarke

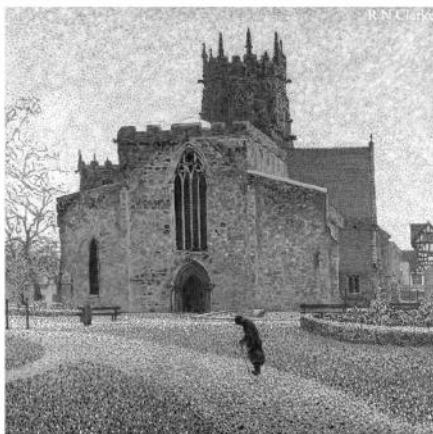
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R N Clarke

Gallery address

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You may remember towards the end of last year, Philip Taylor was elected as Chair of Stafford Deanery Synod. Well now it's the turn of the Diocesan Synod.

Stand up and be Counted

So often diocesan synods are perceived as boring, dry and bureaucratic. This should not be the case! Rather they should exist to serve the mission of the wider Church, to make strategic decisions, and to encourage the growth of mission and ministry in our diocese. So, are you passionate about these things and want to play a more active role in embedding our vision and strategy in the life of all our churches and communities? Then please read on...

What is Diocesan Synod?

Diocesan Synod is our primary elected, representative body and brings people together across the Church of England in Staffordshire, north Shropshire and the Black Country. It holds the diocesan vision, drives mission, sets strategy, elects and appoints a range of positions on boards and committees and shapes priorities. It may respond to questions put to it by the General Synod and is an advisory and deliberative body. It considers the important topics facing our diverse and unique diocese and the wider Church. It is a statutory institution which serves not only our diocese but influences and helps to direct the national church on matters of church, public and government policy. It also includes some mandatory governance items such as approval of the budget and the annual accounts. The membership consists of three houses: the House of Bishops; the House of Clergy; and the House of Laity.

The current three-year term is due to end on 31 July. The next synod members will be elected in the summer of 2024 and serve a term of three years. Meetings are held in March, June and November.

The agenda for 2024-2027: Themes for the next three years will include embedding our diocesan vision and strategy, taking forward the Growing Faith initiative in relation to schools and families; a continuing focus on growth in numbers and depth of discipleship, including new Christians, and new worshipping communities; actively engaging with our local communities, determination to continue to focus on safeguarding, diversity, racial justice and the environment.

What skills and qualities do representatives need?

Vision, Openness, Enthusiasm, Good communication skills

Do you have — or could you develop — some of these qualities to serve the Diocese of Lichfield? If so, can I encourage everyone reading this who is on the electoral roll of your church, is over 16 years of age and an actual communicant to prayerfully consider whether this is something God is calling you to do?

I would be happy to talk to anyone considering this and answer any questions or concerns you may have. Julie Jones

Julie Jones is the Diocesan Secretary/CEO for the Diocese of Lichfield and can be contacted at julie.jones@lichfield.anglican.org or on 01543 306291

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Awards for St Mary's Young Singers

We would like to congratulate Isla, Henry and Carla on gaining their RSCM white level badge.

This is the first award in the RSCM Voice for Life scheme which helps young choristers develop their vocal and musical skills.

Photograph by Paul Milgate-Scarrott

Saturday Morning Coffee Concerts at St Mary's



April 13 Song recital by Rachel Bernard and Elizabeth Haughan, students from Birmingham Conservatoire

April 27 Tim Sagar (organ)

May 25 Stafford Sinfonia Baroque Group

All begin at 11:00am Doors open 10:30
All are welcome Admission free

The Soup Kitchen



This beautiful 16th Century eating house offers the ideal place to meet your friends and is described in The Times as "Stafford's hidden gem". Visitors from all over the world regularly return and comment 'there is nowhere else that compares in atmosphere, traditional old-fashioned service and genuine warm welcome which is unique to Stafford's Soup Kitchen.

Church Lane Antiques



A wide selection of antiques for sale including pottery, glass, silver and jewellery.

We are always interested in buying from single items to house clearance.

Please note we have moved

32 Mill Street

Stafford ST16 2AW

Tel: 01785 223366

CHURCH CONTACTS

St. Mary's

Churchwardens.....Sue Savage
Paul Milgate-Scarrott
Bellringers Selwyn Jones..... 242116

One World Group.....Pauline Roycroft .. 244556
Open Door St. Mary's.....Sue Savage
Julian Meeting.....Sheila Young..... 252023

Director of Music.....Margaret Outen....253182
Email: margaretouten@hotmail.co.uk
Planned Giving Secretary....Chris Bown.... 229192
..... Email: chrisbown@btinternet.com

St. Chad's

ChurchwardenIan Carr.....07714913079

St. Leonard's

ChurchwardenGail Wray01889 271176

WEBSITES:

Website for StaffordChurches: www.staffordchurches.uk

St Mary's Website: www.stmarysstafford.org.uk

St. Chad's Website: www.stchadsstafford.co.uk

Why not follow us on Twitter? @staffordchurch

Facebook: staffordchurches.uk



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Palm Sunday



The Palm Sunday service began at St Chad's then everyone processed through town to St Mary's and continued there.

Thankyou Paul Milgate-Scarrott for the photo.

Contributions to Centrepiece:

If you would like to advertise an event, comment on one you have attended or just share something interesting with us– then please do so.

Email us at: steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk

Deadline is about 10 days before the first Sunday of the month.