

**THE PARISH OF ST. NEOTS WITH EYNESBURY: ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISHIONERS
& ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

Sunday 28th April 2024 in the Church Room after the 9.30 a.m. Eucharist at St Neots.

Apologies:

Annual Meeting of the Parishioners

1. **Appointment of Clerk**
2. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 Meeting of the Parishioners.**
3. **Election of Church Wardens** (*two for St Neots, two for Eynesbury, all being wardens of the whole*).
4. **Disapplication of six-year time limit** (*Churchwardens Measure 2001, s.3*)
5. **St Neots Charities Report.**

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. **Appointment of Clerk.**
2. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting.**
3. **The Receipt of Reports:**
 - (a) **Electoral Roll Report.**
 - (b) **The Annual Report of the PCC and the Financial Statements of the PCC.**
 - (c) **The Safeguarding Officer's report**
 - (d) **The Fabric, Goods and Ornaments Report.**
 - (e) **The Deanery Synod Report.**
 - (f) **Other informal reports of sub-committees and organisations**
4. **Election of 5 Representatives of the Laity to the PCC.**
5. **Appointment of Independent Examiner to PCC**
6. **The Rector's remarks (delivered orally)**
7. **Questions about parochial church matters (if any).**
8. **Resolutions to discuss matters of general church interest (if any).**
9. **Date of next meeting**

A meeting of the PCC follows:

For the appointment of: a Secretary of the PCC; a Treasurer of the PCC; a Vice-chair of the PCC; an Electoral Roll Officer; a Parish Safeguarding Officer; the standing Committee (being in addition to the Minister, two of the Churchwardens and two others); a Stewardship recorder and Gift Aid Officer; Sidesmen.

For the discussion of possible future church bookings.

For the identification of the date of the next meeting, and no other business.

**The Annual Parochial Meetings of the Parish of St. Neots with Eynesbury
Minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners, Sunday 23rd April 2023 held during the 9.30am
Eucharist at St Neots Parish Church.**

Attendance: 70

Following the opening greetings in the service, the Rector, Revd Paul Hutchinson welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that all on the Church Electoral Roll and all on the Civil Electoral Roll for the Parish are entitled to attend: anyone else was welcome to be present but could not participate.

Apologies were received from David and Hilary Read, Roger and Jill Henthorne, Melvyn and Ann Barnsley, Liz Linley, Liz Elson, Roger Simmonds and Carol Way.

1. Catherina Griffiths was elected as **clerk to the meeting**.
2. **The minutes of the 2022 Meeting of the Parishioners** were accepted on a show of hands by a substantial majority of the meeting, with 2 against, and signed as a correct record, after an objection which was overruled as not relevant to the agenda item.

3. Election of Church Wardens:

Christine Miles proposed by Marion Catmull, seconded Jean Donovan.

Tony Hopwood proposed by Christine Thompson, seconded Marion Catmull.

Jacky Isaac proposed by Christian Laughton, seconded Chris Seward.

All were duly elected with thanks for their service during the past year. All will serve as wardens over the whole parish of St Neots with Eynesbury.

4. **St Neots Charities Report.** (Circulated in advance) The report was accepted with thanks to Ron Watkins for his work with the charities.

The meeting of the Parishioners ended, and the service continued.

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Meeting, Sunday 23rd April 2022 held after the Gospel reading during the 9.30am Eucharist at St Neots Parish Church.

Attendance: 70

The Rector explained that members of the Electoral Roll were entitled to attend, but that, as with the previous meeting, others were welcome to observe but not participate. The Rector further explained that, as a more complex meeting, it would be recorded to assist with minute taking.

1. Catherina Griffiths was appointed as **clerk to the meeting**.
2. **The minutes of the 2022 Annual Parochial Church Meeting** were accepted on a show of hands by a substantial majority of the meeting, with 2 against, and signed as a correct record. Before this, the objector in the Meeting of the Parishioners had again stood in her seat to speak. The Rector pointed out to her from the platform that it had been noted last year that she and her husband had left last year's APCM at the start of the meeting, and so an observation of the accuracy of the minute was probably ill founded unless she was going to call a third party witness to say that the minute doesn't correspond with what was said in the meeting. There followed a substantial exchange between the Rector and the

objector (who had been given a microphone) during which she was ruled to be out of order. The objector continued to speak; a churchwarden was asked to take the microphone from her: it was eventually surrendered.

3. The Receipt of Reports: a) Electoral Roll: Elizabeth Sibson, Electoral Roll Officer, reported that since the last meeting on 3rd April 2022, 9 names had been added, and 9 removed from the roll. The roll stands at 237. Of the 9 removed, 6 people had moved away and 3 of these people had died and so the meeting paused to remember them – Reg Flower, Marion Noble and Frank Owens. Elizabeth was thanked for her report.

b) The Report of the PCC: (Circulated in advance). This was accepted by the meeting.

The Financial Statement of the PCC: (Circulated in advance). There were no questions, and the accounts were accepted by the meeting with thanks to Tony Hopwood.

c) Safeguarding Officer's Report: (circulated in advance). There have been no safeguarding issues during the year and the report was accepted by the majority with 2 against.

d) The Fabric, Goods, and Ornaments Report: (circulated in advance). Accepted by all. The inventory is still to be carried out. Thanks were expressed to the Church Wardens and the Treasurer for all their work and support.

e) Deanery Synod Report: (circulated in advance) Accepted by all.

f) Informal Reports: (circulated in advance). Thanks were expressed to all who contribute to the common life of the parish and the time given up to these tasks.

4. Election of 3 Deanery Synod Representatives:

David Wells Prop – Jacky Isaac, seconded Tony Murfin

Tony Hopwood Prop – Christine Thompson, seconded Marion Catmull.

Catherina Griffiths Prop – David Read, seconded Wendy Ibbett.

All were elected unopposed to serve for 3 years.

5. Election of Representatives of the Laity to the PCC:

There were 5 nominations presented to the meeting for 5 places. All were elected, and were appointed to serve for 3 years:

Carol Way Prop – Jacky Isaac; Sec – Glenna Cooper

Christian Laughton Prop – Jacky Isaac; Sec – Chris Seward

Val Freeman Prop – Jacky Isaac; Sec – Christian Laughton

Peter Raggatt Prop – Bruce Elam; Sec – David Smith

Philip Barrett Prop – Catherina Griffiths; Sec – Elizabeth Sibson

6. Independent Examiner to PCC: After three years' service to the new parish, David Jones has stood down as Examiner. Thanks were expressed for his diligence. Fr Paul explained that we had not yet been able to find a replacement, and, as it was the responsibility of the APCM to make the appointment, the remainder of the meeting would need to be adjourned. He proposed and it was generally agreed on a show of hands that the remainder of the meeting be adjourned until Thursday 18th May, after the Ascension Day evening service, when it is hoped that an Examiner can be appointed. The service resumed with the Affirmation of Faith, and Intercessions were led by Canon Robert Sibson.

Minutes of the resumed Annual Parochial Church Meeting, on Thursday 18th May 2023, held at 8.30pm (following the Ascension Eucharist) at St Neots Parish Church.

Attendance: 27

The Revd Paul Hutchinson (Rector) returned to the Chair, and proposed that – in the absence of the PCC Secretary, and in view of the simplicity of the business – he should act as Clerk. On a show of hands, all agreed.

6. (cont) Examiner to PCC: The Rector explained that various enquiries had been but had not yet produced a nominee. Under the Rules, the responsibility for appointment would now pass to the PCC. The Rector also explained that we were in the unusual position of already having regular external scrutiny of our accounts by Sue Chase, accountant – Tony Hopwood said this happened once or twice a month. Sue Chase had confirmed that it was becoming more difficult to find willing independent examiners. The PCC would explore further options.

7. Rector's remarks: there were none.

8. Questions: there were none.

9. Resolutions: there were none.

10. Date of next meeting: The Rector proposed, and on a show of hands all agreed, that the 2024 meeting should take place in St Neots Parish Church on Sunday 28th April (the Fifth Sunday of Easter), immediately following the 9.30 Eucharist (the 11am service at Eynesbury being cancelled). The advertised start time would be 10.30am (allowing the possibility of brief adjournment should the time be needed).

The meeting ended at 8.37pm.

ST NEOTS PARISH CHURCH CHARITIES

The Charity Commission for England and Wales are satisfied that it is expedient in the interests of the charity that the trustees should do so, the Commission has authorised the Trustees of the charity to transfer all its assets and liabilities to The Parochial Church Council of The Ecclesiastical Parish of St Neots with Eynesbury. The Commission authorised the transfer of assets and liabilities under section 106 of the Charities Act 2011 on the 26th. March 2023 for the charity known as

St Neots Bell Rope Charity
Chatteris Charity
Smiths Charity
Reverend John Green Trust
Emily Anne Day Trust
C P Rowley Charities

The Trustees have noted this and will be discussing the way forward.

Account Summary C P Rowley - Vicar and Church Wardens

Total valuation as at 31 December 2023	£17,518.32
Total valuation as at last statement at 1 July 2023	£16,471.30
Total income during the period	£ 250.26
Holdings as at 31 December 2023	£17,518.32
Paid to bank 31/08/23 - 30/11/23	£250.26

Account Summary C P Rowley - Poor

Total valuation as at 31 December 2023	£21,234.15
Total valuation as at last statement at 1 July 2023	£20,123.81
Total income during period	£291.36
Holdings as at 31 December 2023	£21,234.15
Paid to bank 31/08/23 - 30/11/23	£291.36

Account Summary C P Rowley - Insurance of windows and stipend of Curate

Total Valuation as at 31 December 2023	£21,234.15
Total valuation as at last statement at 1 July 2023	£20,123.81
Total income during period	£291.36
Holdings as at 31 December 2023	£21,234.15
Paid to bank 31/08/23 - 30/11/23	£291.36

This has been a difficult year for me personally having spent some 16 weeks in hospital, with the Parkinson's catching up with me. During the year Barclays Bank decided to close our account stating that we had not replied to correspondence. This was not correct but the bank would not change its decision. The income since then has been paid into a ring fenced P.C.C. Account.

In the circumstances I tender my resignation and I wish the Trustees well.

Ron Watkins

Parish Safeguarding Report

The requirement for up to date training and awareness has become increasingly significant, particularly with the introduction, by the Church of England, of the National Safeguarding Standards.

There are 5 Standards covering the following:-

1. Culture, Leadership and Capacity
2. Prevention
3. Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk
4. Victims and Survivors
5. Learning, Supervision and Support

Work is being undertaken by the Diocese to incorporate the Standards into the parish process by linking it to the Parish Dashboards that each parish uses. (A dashboard is an online tool that helps a PCC keep track of safeguarding in a parish) This will enable parishes to measure and develop safeguarding activities.

Each Standard has “What Good Looks Like” indicators to ensure that parishes are fulfilling their responsibilities.

I have attended 3 PCC meetings this last year and apprised members of the above.

I am pleased to report that no safeguarding issues have arisen this year.

Ann Barnsley

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Fabric, Goods and Ornament

Routine servicing in both St. Mary’s Eynesbury and St. Mary’s St.Neots have taken place this includes; fire extinguishers, gutter valleys and downpipes and lightning conductors. The boilers in Eynesbury Church and St. Neots Church Rooms have been serviced. All of the lights in the Chancel at St.Neots have been replaced at a cost of £3,024.

Maintenance has also taken place on the St.Neots organ.

The last Quinquennial Inspection at St.Neots highlighted repairs on a buttress on the South-West corner of the church were required. This was carried out in August at a cost of £16,632 some of this sum being provided by Historic Churches.

Work was carried out in St.Neots Church Rooms which included a new fire escape door being fitted and a new emergency escape route being laid outside the door. This now means that the occupancy of the Church Room is raised to 100.

Two new altar frontals were purchased in July 2023 with money from the Burrows legacy. Two matching ciboria were purchased and paid for from the Burrows legacy and an anonymous donation.

Further discussions are taking place regarding the church wall as this remains the responsibility of St Neots Town Council.

The louvres on the Church Tower need to be replaced once a faculty is obtained. The louvres will be funded by a donation.

Jacky Isaac

PCC

The PCC has met regularly to discuss affairs of the parish; to approve the budget and monitor finances and approve charitable giving; to discuss and approve necessary repairs to the fabric. Helen Bloxham has reported regularly on the Changing Market Towns project and also on the Church Rooms. Ann Barnsley has attended to report on Safeguarding and explain the Diocesan Dashboard scheme which monitors progress. In January the PCC agreed to offer Revd Margaret Marshall the post of Children's Schools and Families Worker, which she took up in February. Margaret attended PCC to report on children's work at the start of her ministry.

Catherina Griffiths

Deanery Synod

The synod met 3 times during 2023. In March Archdeacon Richard Harlow led a discussion about where we are as churches. The June meeting focussed on finance and Fiona McGregor was elected as Deanery Treasurer. Prof Nigel Bastin has been co-ordinating the Deanery Plan which was approved at the October meeting, to which parish treasurers and churchwardens were invited. The Archdeacon was also present at this meeting and parish representatives expressed their particular concerns about finances and resources.

Catherina Griffiths

Churches Together in St Neots

CTSN has become an umbrella group for all the work done by Christians in the town. There is a very small working party continuing to keep links alive. Pam Branch, the secretary has been working in conjunction with St Neots Initiative. Revd Sue Baker-Maher succeeded Revd Ray Porter as Chairman at the AGM. An evening of prayer was held at Berkley St Methodist Church in the Autumn to pray our concerns about the situation in Gaza.

Some of the CTSN groups include the Foodbank, ACTIOS, Thursday Food, the Christian Care Centre, the Men's Forum, St Neots Bereavement and Friendship Group, and Christian Aid.

Catherina Griffiths

Christian Aid

Support for Christian Aid has changed as there are only 3 members of the Committee and we are not in a position to organise large scale fundraising events as in the past. E-envelopes were set up to attract donations online during Christian Aid Week and a total of £1,883.64 was collected by other means by the St Neots CA Group. A total of £2,708.67 was sent to Christian Aid during the year which does not include electronic donations or £244 of Gift Aid. Thank you to everyone who has supported Christian Aid during the year.

Catherina Griffiths

St Neots Initiative Report

The Promotion and Tourism committee (part of the St Neots Initiative) has been meeting regularly in The Museum. This group has representation from ESCA, Churches Together, St Neots Museum, St Neots Local History Society, The Pightle, St Neots U3A, and a representative from the Town Council. Alex Hughes, chairman relaunched the Initiative in March with a dinner at Wyboston Lakes. The Initiative now runs the Citizen Hub on the corner of the Market Square and South Street.

Catherina Griffiths

Sub-committee Reports

Mission and Care

The Committee discussed allocation of charitable giving. Helen Bloxham keeps us informed of news from the various charities. During the year we have had opportunities to hear more about some of our charities with speakers visiting from The Leprosy Mission and Crosslinks.

Children's Activities

All Aboard (Teatime Praise)

Children's, Schools' and Families' work is a long slow enterprise! Just over a year has passed since we began putting special effort into this area of mission. We had no illusions that it would be easy. Consolidation has been the main feature of that year. Thanks to our excellent staff we increased the frequency of Little Saints to weekly, on-demand and improved the content by purchasing new resources. There are still very few children attending. We may soon have to reduce frequency again, as we shall soon have reduced staffing.

The weekly term-time Play Church provides for young families with babies and/or toddlers. It includes a Bible story and original songs. Occasionally baptisms have been sought by families that attend. The refreshments are served by Mothers' Union members and other volunteers - many thanks to them and our leaders over the year. One of these will soon leave, as her youngest starts school in September.

Probably the biggest change has come in the monthly afternoon service. It had originally catered for the same constituency as Play Church, but the age-range has been tweaked up a notch, to make it more truly 'All-age'. It has had a name change recently to 'All Aboard!' to reflect this and to enable it to take place outside teatime slots, whenever seems appropriate. It offers more audience participation, with drama, catchy songs, craft activities and wonderful 'themed' cakes (made by one of the mums). A huge thank you to our pianist, those who have contributed and helped with refreshments.

We have had a 'baptism special' with direct personal invitations and 'Messy Christingle', as well as a very popular Crib Service at Christmas. We have also run one Messy Church session last Easter, but without adequate staff, sadly couldn't repeat it this year.

The take-up of our offerings continues to be variable.

One of our biggest challenges is human resources: I desperately need a 'team' to support this vital work and would be very grateful for offers of help.

Revd Margaret Marshall

Children's Schools and Families Worker

Play Church

We have had a successful year at play church the number of families attending is up and we have run some successful sessions during the school holidays which have proved popular with the whole family.

Margaret has made a big difference to the group with her new songs each week. Her engaging, toddler friendly stories and general rapport with the families that attended.

In the near future hope that we can gain access to another storage cupboard so that we can provide a wider range of toys and activities each week.

Hazel & Sian

Little Saints

We have successfully completed another year of Little Saints, in which we have changed from twice a month to every week starting from September 2023. We have mostly had one or two children attending regularly, and on occasions when visitors have attended Mass with children we have had higher numbers. There is always something prepared every week for the children whatever the numbers. Lessons are now taught using The Children's Liturgy Book which coincides with the adult services throughout the year. This includes doing many activities and crafts on a small budget.

We have also covered many occasions like Mothers/Fathers days and had Christmas and end of school year parties.

Sadly, Jenny is standing down from Little Saints at the end of June, so unless more help is forth coming, we may have to revert back to every 2nd and 4th Sundays again.

Even though there have been small numbers, we have received positive feedback both from the parents and children that they have enjoyed the sessions. As the only member of the leadership team now I will continue to try my best to keep Little Saints going.

Lynn Burnell

Church Organisations

Choir Report

‘Psallam Spiritu et Mente’

‘I will sing with the Spirit and with Understanding’ RSCM Motto
The choir continues to lead worship at most services. We have the monthly choral evensong service which is a complete contrast to the weekly Sunday morning Eucharist. We visited Christ Church St. Leonards-on-Sea in July last year and sang evensong there. Most people had a stroll by the sea but there was a lot of rain. We hope they will visit us this year. We also sang evensong at Coventry Cathedral in November. This year we have a date to sing in St Edmundsbury Cathedral on June 1st and there is the diocesan festival in Ely cathedral in May. We have also been invited to sing evensong at the ‘Crooked Spire’ church in Chesterfield on Saturday August 24th this year.

Very sadly, last year, three of our sopranos left the choir. Two had been long time members in the choir and I thank them for their time. The third got married and has found her work/life, home/life more demanding. We welcomed a new Alto who also sings Soprano so we have a good deputy in either part depending on numbers. Since joining she has mostly sung soprano. We have been very happy to have welcomed two new tenor singers. One, a lady, seems to enjoy what we do and is an asset to our membership. The other, a man, who has told me he enjoys the work of the choir sadly hasn’t been with us for a few weeks due to ill health but he hopes to return soon. Although the choir is going well, we are still short of voices in all parts.

We had been invited to make a return visit to 2024 to sing evensong in the Marien Dom, the St Mary’s Cathedral in Furstenwalde, Germany, The Director of music there, Georg Popp, retires in 2025 at Easter so there won’t be another opportunity. However, the amount of hotel space in Furstenwalde was not enough to house all of us that wanted to go and the Director of Music had forgotten he had asked us and had pre-booked other performers.

Last year I wrote about my broken arm. Well, is it still not completely better, much stiffness in the wrist joint but it is improving. I am now faced with developing cataracts in both eyes. One is further along than the other and so I cannot always see the notes I am supposed to be playing. I apologise for mistakes I make and hope that once the eye is repaired the mistakes will become fewer. We live in hope. No date has been arranged for surgery so it’s a case of wait and see or not so in my case.

Since the end of lockdown I have also been playing at Eynesbury church. It has on two occasions been a rush and on one occasion I arrived seconds after the priest had got to his place in the chancel. It is interesting playing in two different venues within fifteen minutes of each other's service times. I do enjoy playing at Eynesbury and the folk are most welcoming.

Lloyd Barnett

Director of Music

Mothers Union

The year began with an enjoyable New Year Lunch at The Barley Mow Pub. The programme for the year included a variety of speakers on subjects ranging from cross-stitch and patchwork, a talk about Jordan; Behind Closed Doors, a talk on work in the prison; visits from Diocesan speakers about local projects and worldwide links. In March Revd Margaret Marshall led the Quiet Afternoon in Eynesbury Church. Jean Underwood hosted the successful garden party in June raising money for AFIA (Away From It All holidays for families in need). In June some members attended the Diocesan MU Garden Party in the Bishop's garden in Ely; in July members met for lunch at Waresley Garden Centre and in August, some members attended the Shingay Deanery Branch Garden Party. Canon Robert Sibson led the Mary Sumner Day service in August and also the Deanery Advent service in December, the latter being followed by lunch in the Church Room. Two of our members attended the MU Annual Gathering in York, culminating in a lovely service in the Minster.

Ely Diocesan Mothers Union has supported a school's Worker in Wisbech for several years and last year began supporting a Families Worker for Mary's Child, an organisation based in Peterborough. Among other projects supported by our MU are the Mid Cambs Refuge and running a Relationships Course in Littlehey Prison.

Mothers' Union is a worldwide organisation, and is open to all baptised people - regardless of gender, marital status or age - who share its vision 'to bring about a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships'. We meet together on the first Thursday of the month in the Church Rooms at 7.30pm during summer months and at 2pm on the third Wednesday in the winter. All are welcome, For more information contact *Liz Elson, Branch Leader*

Thursday Fellowship Bible Study Group

The Thursday Bible Study Group has grown in size and we now have 13 members attending, and meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays in the Church Room at Eynesbury Church. We meet to start at 2pm until around 4pm and begin with Tea and Coffee as we get the opportunity to chat for 10 minutes or so. Since last January when we were looking at '**Getting the Best out of the Bible**'; then in Lent last year we looked at The Archbishops LENT book –

Failure - and combined it with **Dust & Glory** for 5 weeks, where we gained 4 new members that have stayed with us through the year.

We have also studied a Course on '**Walking with God to Discipleship**'; '**Unsung Gifts**' The Spirit at work in the New Testament; An *Advent* Course called **Promises, Promises**; and for our *Lent* Course this year (2024) we looked at 'DECISIONS, DECISIONS' and how making the right decisions in our lives affects all of our life. We also held a 5 week course on a Friday on the same subject matter for another 12 people.

After Easter, we shall be looking at the Gospel of John, and seeing how and why it is very different from the synoptic Gospels.

If you would like to know more about the Study Group, please speak to Rosemary Darrington who leads it.

Church Flower Arrangers

The team of flower arrangers meet together in church to decorate the building for the main festivals – Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Some of the team take responsibility for certain weeks in between. In the past Dinah Brand made a variety of sandwiches for the team when decorating the church at festival times so it was fitting for us to take her out to dinner to celebrate her 100th birthday during the year. This was such an enjoyable occasion that it was repeated at Christmastime. Thanks are due to Bev and Andrea for their preparation in advance and to all who donate gifts of money and greenery towards the decorations as well as the wonderful team who work well together. Volunteers are always welcome especially when the displays have to be removed.

St Neots Handbell Ringers

The team continue to meet weekly on Sunday evenings at 8pm. We ring a variety of music from popular tunes, tunes from shows to popular classics. In February we entertained members of Somersham Friendship Club, a visit postponed from 2022. In March, St Neots Explorer Scouts came to join us on a very wet night in the Church Room to have a go. In May we had a return visit to Eaton Socon Church for Wednesday Welcome, which resulted in recruiting Marilyn to the group. Our final concert of the year was in December when we entertained members of Eaton Socon Church at their Christmas Lunch. Anyone wishing to learn should contact Catherina Griffiths

Tower Bell Ringers

At the beginning of the year we recruited 2 new ringers, with the hope that they would be ready to Ring for the King on Coronation Day, which they were. Unfortunately David decided that ringing was not for him, but Barbara has become a regular member of the band. A quarter peal was attempted after a service on the night before the Coronation, but was not successful and rung later in the year. Three peals were successfully rung at St Neots during the year – 2 of Cambridge Surprise Royal, and 1 of Spliced Caters and Royal. Six quarter peals were rung. One was to celebrate Wendy Piercy's 80th birthday and then later in the year another was rung in memory of her. Wendy had been a regular ringer at St Neots for many years until her recent illness. We rang for 2 weddings as well as a wedding blessing, the latter for Emma Gill, a former member of the band. In July we took part in the Tower Open Day, explaining and demonstrating bellringing to those visitors climbing to the top. This resulted in 3 more recruits, Amy, Mike and Peter. Although numbers attending practice nights have been low, this has been beneficial for our learners.

We have had visits from local Beavers and Scouts who combined a tower tour and ringing demonstration with a tour of the church.

Three of us continue to meet weekly for a change ringing practice on handbells with reasonable success.

We managed to make up a team of 6 from the tower to take part in the Huntingdon District Bellringers Quiz Night, which we won! We also hosted a district 10 bell practice on a Saturday morning in October which proved very successful.

Eynesbury bells were rung for the Coronation and for a wedding. There were 3 different groups of visitors too. It hasn't been possible to ring those bells regularly for services during the year but the bells were rung prior to the Crib Service on Christmas Eve.

Thanks again are due to Alban Forster, ably supported by David Griffiths for keeping the ringing going

Catherina Griffiths

Men's Forum Group

This meets once a month usually at the Berkley Street Methodist Church

(Members from the Methodist, URC, St Mary's Eaton Socon, and St Mary's St Neots with Eynesbury) attending.

Visits

Old Warden Abbey Vineyard following last years talk.

Talks by visitors at the Methodist Church

Talk on Dan Albone Cycles, Inventor, and Manufacturer of Biggleswade.

Talk on Danny Baker-Mahers walk in Spain surviving the Camino de Santiago.

Talk How to make a violin.

Talk on History of Aviation in Bedfordshire given by Barry Tomlinson

Also

Quiz Evening with fish and chips

Bowls Evening

Games Evening Snooker Evening

Most of the above were attended well but we would like more people from St Mary's St Neots with Eynesbury. You can contact Derek Wheel or Philip Barrett for details for 2024.

2024 Programme

April 16th Talk on North Atlantic Steam ships

May 22nd Visit Nene Valley Railway

June 19th Skittles at visit to Gt Barford Bowls club

July 16th Bowls at Gt Barford Bowls club

Aug 20th Visit to Fuller Mill

Sept 17th Yoga/Tai Chi

Oct 15th St Neots Hand Bells

Nov 18th Snooker Evening

Dec 17th AGM

Philip Barrett

Book Group

There are now 8 members in the group and we meet regularly to read and discuss a variety of books, usually borrowed from the library such as Gilead by Marilynne Robinson; The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver; The Women of Holy Week by Paula Gooder; Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan; The Familiars by Stacey Hall; The Silent Child by Jim Kelly; Toffee Apples and Quail Feathers by Jennifer Worth; The Silent Companions by Laura Purcell; and a biography of our own choice.

Catherina Griffiths

Saturday Social

Saturday Social is now in its 3rd year, and has become a regular “meet up” time for many. We celebrated two special occasions last year, one was a parishioner’s 100th Birthday and the other was our 2nd Birthday. The latter was celebrated with a huge cake in Church amongst the books and stalls of the autumn fayre. We now have a few people attending who are not regular worshippers, which is lovely to see. With the help of those who make the tea (and sometimes cake and special hot chocolate!) the morning runs smoothly. We often have second hand Books, CDs and Jigsaws to purchase, and we have had the Mothers Union cards for sale a couple of times a year too. Anyone is welcome and there is no charge, we put a donations pot out just to cover the cost of the refreshments.

Angela Robertson & Christine Miles

Thursday Food

Thursday Food has been running in the church hall at Eynesbury Methodist Church since January 2022. It is a group made up of volunteers from many of the churches (and non-church people) in the town. Each Thursday we prepare and serve food for homeless or vulnerably housed people within our community. It is an opportunity to share a meal and fellowship together with people who may otherwise be eating alone, or not at all.

The weekly meals usually consist of a main course and hot dessert, all prepared and cooked on site. There are 5 or 6 volunteers each week. Guest numbers fluctuate but we average 10-15 guests per session, although we have had over 20 or less than 5 on some occasions.

In December we hosted a Christmas party, providing a Christmas roast with all the trimmings. All of the 20+ guests who attended that evening received a goodie bag to take home.

We continue to be very grateful to the Methodist Church for being such supportive and generous hosts. As a sign of our appreciation, we gave a donation during 2023 towards a new cooker, and at the end of the year we made another donation to help cover some of our electricity costs.

We are also extremely grateful for the help we have received from Churches Together, not least with regard to insurance and bank account facilities. Many thanks to John Wrycroft for handling these funds for us via Churches Together. A huge thank you to the people who so generously give of their time, resources and cooking talents week by week to ensure that some of the most vulnerable in our town get at least one hot, nutritious meal each week.

Jane Gill

Foodbank and Acts435 Report

The Foodbank has had a very busy year. Donations of food and money have thankfully kept pace with demand but unfortunately numbers of individuals and families in need continue to increase. We provide parcels of tinned and packet food to those referred to us, and in addition we use our financial donations to purchase vouchers from Waitrose which we give to our visitors so that they can choose to spend them on fresh and frozen fruit, vegetables, and eggs.

Here are the comparative figures for the last two years:

	2022	2023
Stock In	32,105 kg	29,425 kg
Stock Out	29,913 kg	32,414 kg
People Fed	2,409 (1,457 adults, 952 children)	2,686 (1,652 adults, 1,034 children)
Vouchers	1,066	1,247

We are fortunate in having advisers from Citizens' Advice and "mast" (formerly Loves Farm Money Advice) at our Distribution Centres and through their involvement a lot of our visitors have managed to reduce their debt and improve budgeting skills, as well as receiving advice and support on a range of issues.

Acts 435 is going extremely well. In the last year we have helped 20 individuals and families through donations of £2285. Items purchased have included washing machine, cooker, bedding, school shoes, a sewing machine, and a number of debt relief orders. We were pleased that the recent Budget is to

cancel the £90 charge for a Debt Relief order from April as this will be so helpful to those who are struggling.

We are incredibly grateful to those of you who support these two much needed initiatives. Please do contact me if you have any questions, or would like more information on how you can help.

Carol Way

The Friends of St Neots Parish Church

The Friends of St Neots Parish Church were incorporated as a registered charity 10 years ago in May 2014. Our objects are to raise funds to assist in the repair, restoration and improvement of St Neots Parish Church and its churchyard. Membership is open to all and we are non-religious. Being a charity we are registered for Gift Aid (25% of any donations) with HMRC so all donations welcome!

Membership is small and so new Friends are very welcome especially from younger generations who may wish to become Committee members! Annual subscription is £25.00 pa.

Since May 2014 the Friends have currently paid £17,909.00 to the PCC or companies for various projects and repairs. There have been no requests for funds from the PCC since February 2020 (Covid affected 2020 to 2022) and so our not insubstantial reserves are on deposit pending decisions being made by the PCC on future projects.

On 29th April 2023 the Friends hosted, for the third time, The King's Men, being the Choral Scholars of Kings College Cambridge and on 5th April 2024, our 13th concert, was given by Jordan Ashman, Percussionist, and BBC Young Musician of the Year 2022.

Bruce Elam, Chairman.