

St Mary's Churchwardens Report 2022-2023

Following our Quinquennial inspection in May 2021 we have been tackling, or attempting to tackle, the recommendations in the report. Whilst there were no major concerns, as one might expect of a church of this age a couple of things needed ongoing monitoring. We have a rolling schedule of maintenance checks on various aspects of the building and the churchyard. Damp and woodworm have been constantly monitored and have not got any worse. The small cracks in the East window have proved too high for our scaffolding and will need specialist equipment. Whilst cleaning and painting gutters was recommended we are keeping this under review and will attend to it as time and finances permit. Other recommended work is due to be phased through to the next Quinquennial. This will be reviewed and actioned in the light of available resources - especially financial resources.

The container was constructed in the first quarter of 2022 and provides well needed, and secure, storage. We need to arrange for some trellis screening and planting. The ride-on mower has proved to be a temperamental and troublesome piece of kit throughout 2022. But we are extremely grateful for the patient help of Gary Ives who has made it his mission to get the mower operational. It will need careful nurturing during the cutting season under Roger's guidance. We also took delivery of a rotavator which will be used, not least, to keep the brambles in check behind the fence at the back of the churchyard.

Our regular churchyard clear ups were held during the summer and shoulder seasons and we will continue these on Saturday mornings throughout 2023. In addition we will draw up a scheme of work so that folk might come along at other times and undertake recommended work.

The proposed garden of rest at the east of the church took a major step forward over the last six months. This is a collaboration with MK City Council who are funding the work. Major groundwork has already taken place to clear the shrubs, remove the hedge, trim the trees and erect a boundary fence. Matt, Roger and Jonathan have been in regular contact with the Council who are now drawing up design plans based on our suggestions. MK City Council have been very helpful and cooperative in this project. The area will be seeded in the near term and it is hoped that work will be finished by September 2023.

We continue to use both the office and the conservatory in the Community Centre over the road. These are regularly used by the ministers in the WCP, for bible study sessions and for the Friday Community Cafe.

We continue to take communion in the same manner as during covid and, with the very pleasing increasing number of communicants, we keep this under review. We now offer a non-alcoholic option.

A few weeks ago we held a fire drill – the first for quite some while. The building was safely evacuated in one minute 10 seconds. We are very grateful for everyone's cooperation in this necessary procedure. We are seeking to increase the number of fire marshals so that we have two on duty/standby at every service. Please let us know if you would like to help; it requires a little training and the role is not onerous.

We couldn't keep our lovely church building and churchyard in such good order without the help of many friends. We are truly thankful to those who help on a regular basis as welcomers, on the sound desk, readers and intercessors at our services, with churchyard clear-ups and with necessary odd jobs around the building and in the churchyard. Serving is an act of worship and we would welcome further help inside and outside the church. Please do not hesitate to speak to one of us if you are able to offer a little help.

Finally, but not least, our grateful thanks to Matt and Alise for everything that they do. For the leadership of services and daily inspiration; for leadership and pastoral care; for all their practical help; and for their unstinting support for us both.

2022 has again been a positive year and we pray that, with God's guidance, we will build on that in 2023. We would both be delighted to serve another year as Churchwardens with the agreement and support of church members.