



# St Mark's Church

LEAMINGTON SPA

Reports from the groups and activities

at St Mark's Church

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

**May 2022**

**Belonging... Believing... Becoming...**

**A community of believers, sharing God's love with  
the world**



This is a collection of reports about the activities that have taken place over the last year from the many groups that make up the body of St Mark's. It is in addition to the 'Annual Report and Financial Statements of the PCC' which is the 'official' report from the Parochial Church Council and Churchwardens.

**Registered Charity Number 1128485**

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## **VICAR'S COMMENTS – Revd. Jo Parker**

At the start of this year we were still very much in the clutches of Covid and although we had tentatively started Thursday Church and Evening Services these were carefully planned to keep everyone safe. In the evening service we took on the Prayer Course and the Bible Course which were excellent resources. We finally came back into church on Sunday morning on the 27<sup>th</sup> June and it felt a bit weird with masks and social distancing and no refreshments! Our new worship pattern is well established with Thursday Church meeting for Coffee and cake from 9am and the service at 10.30am. Sunday morning worship is now at 10am and in the evenings at 6.30pm. It has taken some time for people to feel comfortable coming back and we continue to live stream our Sunday morning service thanks to some great tech support and your generosity purchasing the equipment we needed. It has been great to welcome new people to our church community despite all the restrictions and even better now we are mask free and have some time to get to know each other over coffee.

This year we have been encouraged to take caring for our planet more seriously and as a church have achieved our Bronze Eco Award. We continue to recycle various things and a regular email goes out to all the church community to keep us thinking critically about what difference we can make. We have also been developing a wildlife garden; and I am grateful to everyone who gets involved and makes these things happen.

Our work in schools has had a huge impact this year with the work Ros and Heather have been doing. Ros also organised a fundraiser at church to raise money towards a new sensory room being built at Brookhurst School and Fiona organised a Christmas Fair to raise money to go towards a new library at Milverton School. Both were great community events and we welcomed many local families. Many of the families revisited us for our Christmas Trail after we had to cancel the Christingle services and it has been great seeing the school groups back in church again with Ros.

It has been very special having both Heather and Ruth working with us as curates. Sadly Ruth stepped down last November due to ill health and we wish her all the best as she works hard to get well. Unexpectedly, we

are also saying goodbye to Heather this year and we are grateful for all that she has brought to us and the way she has managed her life and work during 2 very unusual years. I know our young people will miss her and we are working to make good provision for the youth work at church as Heather leaves us.

The last year has given us time to reflect on our vision for our church and community and we recently launched our new vision statement which I think reflects the heart of who we are as a church community and how we want to welcome others and grow in our relationship with God.

We have also revisited the 5 year Church Development Plan which we launched shortly before lockdown and have drawn out 4 priorities for us as we move forward in to 2022. (You can find these in our Trustees Report.)

I am excited about what the next year holds for us all in church and in our local communities.

Thank you to our staff team who have worked hard to keep up with all the changes, to our PCC who have been hugely supportive and encouraging and to our Church Warden, Marcella, who helps hold it all together. Finally thank you to all of you who have persevered with us online, in gardens, behind masks and socially distanced. Thank you for your prayers, your practical support and your financial support all of which have sustained us and enabled our mission to go forward.

## **CURATE'S REPORT - Revd Heather Elson**

The last 12 months have very much felt like a year that has been gradually gathering momentum. As Covid restrictions have lifted, it's been possible to do more and more, which has been brilliant!

Chaplaincy in Brookhurst has continued. I go in weekly to provide pastoral support sessions to students. I also spend time wandering around the school chatting to staff, which has been great for building relationships. We've started doing playground activities at lunch time. A short activity is prepared that we then take onto the playground, so that passing children can stop and do the activity and have a chat with Ros and me, if they

would like. It's a great way to make contact with the wider school body, and also an opportunity to share some positivity and encouragement. Our first playground activity was on 'identity' and 'what makes you you'. We were encouraging the children to reflect on the fact that we are all different and unique but also very special and valuable. About 100 children stopped to chat and take part, which was brilliant. We also went and taught the Easter Story to the Reception children; we used Resurrection Eggs which seemed to go down very well and kept everyone engaged. When I leave, chaplaincy will continue in Brookhurst. Ros will become the school chaplain; the school are very grateful and pleased that this will continue! It's been a great year, and despite Covid restricting things a bit on and off over the year, it now really feels that there is a positive, open relationship with the school and the school are very pleased to have us involved and very much appreciate the support we give. The children are very keen to say hello and stop to talk and it feels a real privilege to be able to share positivity and encouragement and support with the school body.

Youth group is now up and running, and is one of the highlights of my week! There are about 7-8 children that attend. We meet in the upstairs room where we play games, chat, listen to music and eat a lot of food! It's been lovely to see the friendships developing amongst the young people and such a privilege to chat with them about their weeks and how things are going in school. I have been assisted by Tanya, one of our Church members, since the group started. There is another person who is also interested in volunteering and helping lead youth group. However, we do need to think about who will take on the youth work once I have left. Youth really value relationships and being listened to, and we would love them to think of St Mark's as their home and to feel they belong. It would be great if they started to bring friends along. In order for youth work to thrive however, it needs a few people to really commit to the youth: leading youth group, offering outings, perhaps Christian youth festivals etc. We have a core group of youth now and we have some children in year 5 and 6 who will shortly be youth. So, it might be time to think about whether St Mark's want to hire a youth worker!

I've also been leading a new small group which meets fortnightly. The group has been going well but again, we are now into thinking who will take this group forward when I leave. Prayers would be appreciated for this!

There have been various other activities and acts of worship over the last year, summer fun, the Christmas nativity, various sermon series and many pastoral conversations and walks. A busy year which has sped by!

I've now taken baptisms, funerals, and a wedding; all have been a real privilege and I am hugely grateful to Jo for teaching me what to do, and how to be, and what an important part of ministry these services and acts of worship are.

Jo has been an absolutely, brilliant Training Incumbent. I have learnt so much, and hopefully grown and improved a lot as well! We have laughed, and prayed, and it has been such a blessing to work with a vicar who loves and prays and lives so fully!

Thanks also to Ros who has 'mostly' welcomed my many ideas of new games and activities to do with the children! Ros' joy and belief in the children and families of St Mark's has been inspiring and Ros has been a hugely encouraging and supportive colleague.

Amanda has kept me on the straight and narrow in all things admin and the way St Mark's functions and has helped me out with my many questions! I am very grateful for her wisdom and for counsel.

And of course, Fiona; a new colleague but one who has brought much laughter and joy, and cake, into the office! It has been a joy to be a part of this team.

As I near the end of my time with St Mark's, I just want to say, thank you so much for having me! It has been a strange two years, with a lot of time spent online, but I'm so grateful for this last year particularly, the chance to get to know you more, to do new things in person, to see St Mark's come back into Church and be a community together again. I've learnt a lot during my time here. I've laughed a lot, and I've really appreciated all the support you have given me, particularly in relation to the loss of my friend. I so much appreciate and enjoy how you all support each other,

and I will be sad to leave you all. It really feels that I'm leaving at a time when something is stirring at St Mark's and new things are bubbling!

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORK - Ros Davies**

The St Mark's Children's and Families work aims to:

1. Encourage the growing (Strengthening) of faith throughout childhood.
2. Support children and their whole families in matters of life and faith.
3. Develop further a loving, nurturing church community who welcome children fully.

Although I am hugely aware that some are still being affected by Covid, after what seems to have been such a long time we appear to be getting back to some kind of normality!

Our children are able to meet again in person, we are all enjoying being together in our different groups learning about God, having fun, and cementing friendships. We are continuing to use the Roots material which seems to work well for everyone. The aim is that whatever we do, the session is fun as we learn about God and the Christian faith. We encourage the children to have a positive experience with the leaders and their peers. The children are extremely supportive and caring towards one another.

### **Scramblers: Reception**

After running our Scrambler group for over a 20-year period, Rozi has decided it is time to step down. She has been a wonderful, dedicated leader, huge thanks go to her for all that she has done. Although Rozi will be missed in group we will still see her in church. Sheila Robinson and Lynne Thomas will continue to assist in Scramblers.

### **Climbers: Yr 2- 3**

Clare Jennings assists, and I lead Climbers.

We share a time of news and enjoy a snack. The children enjoy listening to the Bible passage. We have some very interesting and lively discussions.

## **Explorers: Yr 4- 6**

April Harris continues to run Explorers assisted by Sophie Harper. This group meets in the hall.

## **Pathfinders: Yr 7+**

Vandella and Tom King run this group, they meet in the upper room for breakfast before their session begins.

## **1st Sunday of the month:**

The children's groups join together in the lounge. Bev Kirton assists me with the group there is an age range from 3 – 9 years, I find that the Roots material works particularly well here as it covers the age range perfectly.

## **St Marks Crèche:**

St Marks crèche is set up with toys snacks and drinks allowing parents and toddlers / babies to take time out of the service if they want to. It gives them their own space to enjoy when the older children go to their groups.

## **All Age services, 2nd Sunday of the month 10.00am:**

Jo, Heather, and I work together to plan and deliver these services. Andrew McEvoy continues to ably lead the music team for our sung worship. We are encouraging our children and young people to get involved, they are doing such a great job! They are confidently and happily joining in writing meaningful prayers and reading beautifully. After discussion we agreed with our uniform groups that we would hold 3 / 4 parade services a year – we do look forward to having them with us.

## **Baptisms:**

I continue to coordinate baptisms. This allows me the perfect opportunity to get to know families who live within our parish and to welcome them to St Mark's not only for their baptisms, but also when they attend various services during the course of the year.



## Summer Fun:

We ran summer fun throughout August. Once again this was a great success and was attended by many of our local families. We plan to run it again this summer.

## Schools work:

We continue to have an active presence in both Milverton and Brookhurst Schools, delivering assemblies and offering pastoral support sessions to various children.

Both Milverton and Brookhurst visit church for the Experience journeys throughout the year. These support the RE curriculum whilst encouraging the children and teaching staff to visit us at St Mark's; in turn these sessions allow us the opportunity to offer a really warm welcome.

Milverton came into church for their nativity service in early December.

Heather and I have worked together in Brookhurst, it has been an absolute joy to see Heather's relationship grow so positively with both children and teaching staff!

We ran a fundraiser in September for Brookhurst school. Thank you to everyone involved the money raised will go towards a pastoral space at the school.

I have become **"A Champion of Friends at Milverton"** I plan to run playground activities for the children to join in with– this will allow the opportunity for me to reconnect with the children and teaching staff as things fall back into a more normal pace of life after Covid. Our 1<sup>st</sup> activity: the children really enjoyed describing themselves.



## Toddler groups:



Our toddler groups run on Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9:15 – 10:45am.

Both days are popular with our local community;

parent's grandparents and carers enjoy a relaxed atmosphere with an opportunity to meet and chat with others over tea /coffee and toast while their children play. Our helpers in this groups are currently Angela Middleton, Sidney Syson, Sophie Harper, Anne Tarrant and Bev Turner.



Our lovely new kitchen donated by Lauren – this favourite, is well played with and much loved by the children. Thank you, Lauren.

The middle of December saw a rise in Covid cases locally, with this in mind and after discussion we took the decision not to host our Christingle service. Instead, we opened the church for a Christmas trail – this proved to be hugely popular and was attended by many of our local families.

Our children and those attending the Christmas fair decorated our Christmas tree as only children can! it was absolutely laden with decorations.

Our nativity service took place in the afternoon rather than the morning. The children helped Heather and me narrate and once again the children along with angel Gabriel absolutely shone and made it a truly joyous and memorable service.



## **Highlights:**

Working alongside Heather has been such a blessing – I will miss her hugely, I wish her well in her new post.

Seeing our children grow in confidence both in their groups and in our services has been wonderful. I do look forward to more of their involvement in our All-Age services.

## **Thank you:**

To our wonderful volunteers who support the Children and Families work in so many areas.

So, if you are involved in or support the children's work in any way, a huge thank you. Whether it's as a volunteer for the Sunday groups, toddler groups, or whether it's running the sound desk. Whether you bring along hay bales for our nativity service or your tent /tomb for Experience Easter thank you so much. Please do continue to pray to give thanks for all that is good, and for our wonderful volunteers without whom the children's work could not happen.

Thank you to Jo and our staff team who are encouraging and supportive; and also, to Marcella who works quietly and tirelessly for us.

## **SMALL GROUPS – Amanda di Giovanni**

The beginning of 2022 sees us with nine small groups, two of which are new, and one has had a change of leadership. Groups are meeting in a range of different ways: in person, outside and via zoom. The latter being

particularly helpful for those with small children or who live some distance away.

As always, a range of resources has been used over the last year. Some groups following the sermons and questions set by the preachers. The 24/7 Prayer “Be Still” Course and ‘Books of the Bible in X minutes’ videos on YouTube (try [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= O- U9GfIPM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-U9GfIPM) ) have also proved popular.

Small Group Leaders’ Meetings have been held on Zoom – which seems to have been a popular alternative to having them in person. Small groups are a great place to get to know people, to work through the challenges of living out our faith in everyday life and to pray and support one another. They are one of the main places where we can work out the ‘Believing’ part of our new vision for the church. *“This relates to the trunk of the tree, growing upwards from the roots as we explore the Christian faith together. The trunk is solid and strong, offering us a safe and communal place to ask big questions and discover what it might mean to follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us to learn, and to ‘grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is’. This life-long process unfolds through small groups...”*

If you would like to join a small group, please let me know. We operate a “try before you buy” policy – if you don’t think the group is right for you, then please feel free to try another one.

## **CHAPLAINCY AT ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA COLLEGE**

### **- Marie Calvert**

Our work at Leamington College (part of Warwickshire College Group) inevitably halted due to Covid, and we have just been getting back into it over the last few months. However, our team is depleted, and we are keen for more people to join us. It doesn’t have to be in an ‘up front’ role, and it typically takes an hour or so every couple of weeks. but we also need people to pray and encourage us, so if you might be interested do get in touch with me, Marie. Rev Heather was going to get more involved but obviously that won’t happen now as she is leaving us in the summer – but she has been really helpful in supporting me and offering ideas, for

which I'm very grateful. The College is very happy for us to go in and are very welcoming which is wonderful, and we want to develop this work further and to share God's love with the wonderful young people there, as well as the staff.

## **MISSION REPORT – Sarah Lee**

Our commitment to giving a tithe of our income to individuals and organisations working directly in mission continues and last year this comprised around £14,700 (see Missionary and Charitable Giving in the accounts for 2021). Some of these work internationally and some are local/UK based (see list below). A one-off donation was sent to 'World Vision', who have been active throughout the pandemic in providing support to children in areas of extreme poverty, where healthcare and vaccination are very limited (see their website: [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)). Again, owing to the pandemic, it was not possible to hold the Christingle Services planned in December. A donation was sent to The Children's Society in lieu of this, recognising that they, as many charitable organisations, have had income significantly reduced due to the cancellation of similar events.

On a positive note, we are thrilled that Dan and Phillipa have finally managed to travel to Lamjung in Nepal and are working hard there in their parallel ministries in healthcare (Dan) and education (Phillipa). We are thankful for their safe travel, provision of a place to live and developing relationships within the local community. We continue to pray for them and their work as well as their family here in UK.

### **Organisations supported this year:**

***Open Doors:*** serving the persecuted church around the world. Please see their website for information about the invasion of Ukraine and implications for Christians should religious freedom be ended.

***Tear Fund:*** addressing people's physical and spiritual needs, working in over 50 of the world's poorest countries. Tearfund are promoting awareness of the issues of Climate Change in many of these countries and

have presented an overview of their work in a recent service at St Mark's as a part of our Eco-church Initiative.

**CORD:** working to build peace and bring relief & reconciliation to troubled parts of the world – Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Laos, Myanmar.

**CPAS:** has transformed its ministry in the past couple of years, running many courses in church leadership and associated support virtually as well as their camps for children and young people (Ventures and Falcon). It is exciting that many of these will be taking place 'for real' this year with a number from St Mark's participating.

**CAP:** in partnership with other churches we are funding a full-time worker to help local people tackle debt issues, ably supported by Beryl Chisholm and a team of many from local churches.

**Local organisations and ministries:** Leamington Street Pastors, Nightlight, Foodbanks, Crossteach, Helping Hands, Inclusive Church, Thrive Youth Ministries.

**Dan and Phillipa Munday:** Now working in Nepal (see above) as Church Missionary Society associates.

## **ECO CHURCH – Sophie Harper**

Over the past year, our commitment to playing our part in caring for God's creation has expanded, and we have signed up to Eco Church, receiving a bronze award in November 2021. There is a small team of people who work to keep the focus on this area of ministry, and between us we cover a range of factors, from making the building as environmentally friendly as possible and ideas on how to use the external spaces, to seeking to keep the members of the Church informed on ways they can help the environment and God's world.



Heating systems have been looked at, wild outside areas developed, and a 12 month focus on different eco areas started in January, looking at

aspects such as energy usage, food waste, and the impact of the fashion industry. Our recycling scheme has re-started focussing on items which can't be placed in the kerb side system but are collected by shops in town. We look forward to the continued development of all this work as we seek to play our part in re-establishing good stewardship of God's world.

## **MAKE – Marcella King**

Make, a craft evening open to the whole community, met monthly between September and December 2021. We made the decision not to continue into 2022 as numbers were small due to COVID and new volunteers were not forthcoming. It may start again in future if the time is right, and help appears. If anyone would like to chat about this, please let me know.

## **CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP) -**

### **Beryl Chisholm**

CAP describes itself as a poverty busting, soul saving ministry which seeks to serve the poor and save the lost through the Churches in our Nation.



The Debt Centre based at St Mary's Church in Leamington continued to help those in debt but via zoom rather than visiting clients in their homes.

Another aspect of CAP's work is the CAP Money Course. This is a 3-week course which aims to help people manage their finances better; live within a budget; clear debts & save for the future. Some of the people who come on our courses have money but don't have a system for looking after it so don't know where it disappears to each month. You don't have to be in debt to benefit from doing the course.

In 2021 we ran 5 courses, one of which was a student course, and this was held at St Paul's Church with 4 students attending. The other courses were held on zoom. A delegate on one of our courses has become debt free through the help she has received from CAP. On one of the courses there were 4 volunteers from CAB who attended to find out what our course can offer.

We have run 1 course on zoom in 2022 and are planning the next course in person. I am also arranging another student course but for those who are at university or in further education. Students on the last course we ran were about to embark on further education.

CAP celebrated 25 years in June 2021 and the need for debt help is still great. A charity which was started with a £10 donation in the bedroom of John Kirkby, the founder of CAP, is now international as we are working in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. This is a testament to John's obedience and God's faithfulness.

We believe that CAP Money Courses are an important tool in helping people manage their money effectively. If anyone is interested in doing the course, please let me know as courses are run throughout the year. Also, if you believe God is calling you to join us as a CAP Money Coach then do speak to me. You don't need to be a financial expert you just have to know that God is calling you to this ministry. It involves one online training session. Sidney Syson, Andrew Cooper Tracy Bevan and myself are part of the team and we have 2 CAP Money Coaches from Myton Church, 1 from Saltisford and 1 from Life Community Church.

If anyone needs CAP's help with debt problems, they can phone free on 0800 328 0006

## **OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD (SHOEBOXES) - Beryl Chisholm**

Last year, 313 shoeboxes were collected from the back of Church and each box would put a smile on a child's face. By making a donation online I have been able to find out that my box was 1 of 13597 boxes sent to Nigeria.



A huge thank you to everyone who filled a box or provided items to go into a box. It is also an opportunity to share the love of Jesus with each child who receives a shoebox as each child is given a copy of a book called The Greatest Journey which is as book of Bible stories.



## **FIRS LUNCH - Sidney Syson**

Having had our last lunch in March 2020 we re-started in October 2021 and since then have been building up our numbers. Our very grateful thanks to Beryl Chisholm, the Tarrant's, The Thomas's, Richard Sanders and others who set tables and help clear up. And of course, to our wonderful cooks, Beryl Chisholm, Katy Fermor, Jackie Sanders, myself, and Jane Wigman ably assisted by Jane and Margaret.

FIRS is open to all serving a really good lunch at 1pm, on the second Tuesday of the month for £4.

## **CLEANING – Nikki Hill**

As always, a huge thank you to the regular team who keep the brasses & glass polished, the toilets cleaned, the carpets hoovered & certain areas dusted. We seem to be coping with the current system of occasional 'spring cleans' at key times in the year like Christmas, Easter & Harvest; and my thanks to those who 'pick up' as they go especially the flower arrangers for sweeping up bits they notice. Please let me know if you spot anything that needs attention.

## **GARDENING – Amanda di Giovanni**

Gardening in the last year has focussed on 'The Bluebell Project'. Working on the area at the east end of the garden to make it more wildlife friendly. Undergrowth has been cleared, shrubs pruned back, paths marked out and English bluebells and snowdrops planted. We are waiting now to see what comes up this spring. This has been masterminded by Helen Cooper so if you are interested, please speak to her. We would particularly like to hear from anyone with knowledge of land management &/or creating wildlife friendly areas.

Other parts of the garden have not been completely neglected: Richard, Tony, Julie and myself have been doing bits as and when we can and Peter has been keeping the grass, leaves and weeds around the church under control.

As part of our commitment to eco church we have bug hotels and are awaiting some bird feeders the Explorers are making. If you would like to

manage a bit of the church garden, or would like to develop an area to make it more wildlife friendly please do have a word with me.

## **RAINBOWS – Julie Brown**

Due to lockdown a lot of our meetings were completed on Zoom, but returned back face to face as soon as we were able to do so. Girls continued to work on interest badges, make promises and achieve Gold, Silver and Bronze awards.



We enjoyed a Thinking Day on Zoom joining with North Caroline, Sheffield Grenoside Rainbows; girls who participated were awarded a Chief



Commissioner badge. Also, a Teddy Bears Picnic in which we had an amazing lady look alike as Lady Baden Powell.

The Unit kept the Rainbow Garden absolutely beautiful throughout lockdown leaving it as a wonderful safe place to talk and pray throughout Covid.

During lockdown Rainbows were given a prayer bear and enjoyed decorating their homes with beautiful Window displays of rainbows. Before Christmas the Unit collected items for Carriers of Hope for Afghanistan families.

St Marks Rainbow's celebrated their 30th Birthday and 30 years of me running the Unit at St Mark's. I was also awarded Chief Commissioner Award which was an absolutely amazing surprise along with Brownie Guider Cathy Thorpe. I continue to support new leaders within their adult leadership throughout North Leamington.



Leaders worked together to help families hit by Covid delivering fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as Easter treats, during lockdown. We have an amazing team that is just so compassionate and caring always there to offer support and prayer.

Rainbows have recently been taking part in the Aid to Ukraine appeal which is amazing. Girls took part in the Tree of Light Festival at St Mary Magdalene and enjoyed decorating the tree to the theme Save our Seas. We enjoyed an evening celebrating Diwali led by one of our parents and a wonderful Rainbow.



## **BROWNIES - Cathy Thorpe**

The Brownies have adapted to the challenges throughout 2021 and during the time we could not meet face to face, we had weekly Zoom meetings supported by Girlguiding's 'At Home' programme. We found '12 ways to Celebrate' which explored different festivals. Owl cycled



round to deliver treats and resources and sometimes the meeting came from her caravan- we just did what we could-when we could.

Scavenger hunts and cooking activities were especially popular, but we also completed the



'Live Smart' Skills Builder towards the 'Skills for my Future' Theme award with Balloon Rockets, Bottle Flutes, Fajita Fun and making a Room in a Box. We developed STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) awareness on International Women and Girls in Science Day.

In the Summer term we were delighted to be able to meet in the garden outside the Church Hall. We could use the parachute, play circle games, do nature trails, and enjoyed a bbq.



The Autumn Term saw us meeting inside again, with restrictions, and we were able to introduce the traditional meeting structure to our new recruits. We celebrated Harvest together and completed the Parliament Week badge. We had a Strictly Brownies 'Move and Shake' evening in aid of Children in Need. We explored our 'Express Myself' theme and completed the 'Innovate' Skills Builders with 'Mime Time'. We made Advent candles and did Christmas crafts, and some parents were able to join us at a distance to share their daughters making their Brownie Promise.

We are pleased to have been able to keep going throughout the challenges and are gradually picking up numbers again. Natalie (Mole), Holly (Hedgehog) and Cathy (Owl) head the Brownies team with Freya, popular with the girls as a Young Leader working towards her Duke of Edinburgh Service. Emily (Hare) has joined us since we have been back in the hall. Our volunteers give their time generously to support the girls on their Brownie journey.

We are keen to welcome anyone who would like to join our fun and varied skill-building activities, all in the supportive fellowship of Girlguiding.

Thank you again to all the St. Mark's family, for all your support.



## **GUIDES – Liz Cohen**

2021/2022 has been a quiet year for the Guides having returned to face-to-face meetings in June following a long hiatus due to the Covid 19 restrictions. We had a handful of virtual meetings during the restrictions.

However, there were some celebrations to be had in July 2021 when 4 of our older Guides successfully completed all clauses of their Gold Award (the new highest award in Guides since the new programme was launched). We were pleased to invite Jo to the award ceremony which took place on the church lawn. The girls had completed a variety of badges including photography, media critic, personal branding (who am I?) and Guiding traditions plus challenges, including DofE expeditions and cooking caramel, despite the pandemic getting in the way.

Unfortunately, when we returned after the summer holidays, we found we were extremely low in number due to a variety of reasons, for example, new interests, reaching 14/15 which is the upper limit for Guides and there were no Brownies ready to come up to us. We made a difficult decision to suspend the Unit until the waiting list improved and more Brownies were ready to move. This has been a local issue with other units too. We were also low on leaders due to their personal circumstances changing.

We will be looking to restart the Guide Unit in September 2022 so if there are any budding 10-14 year old girls wishing to start a new exciting route through Guiding parents/guardians should click on the [Join Us](#) page of Guiding UK to express an interest and we will be alerted to any new enquiries.

We would also like to encourage any potential adult volunteers to express interest through [Join Us](#) too as we would welcome new helpers and anyone who would be interested in taking a more permanent role as a leader to join us in making it a successful relaunch in September. There are several roles available including flexible/occasional volunteering through Guiding.

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/>

Thank you for the continued support of the church. See you in September.

## **SCOUTS – Peter Harman**

As National and Scouting Covid restrictions/rules ebbed and flowed during 2021 we made every use of the opportunities to meet face-to-face. There were fewer restrictions for us meeting outside, so during the Summer term 2021 the Scouts and Cubs were largely based at Newbold Comyn Park, while the Beavers used the outside space around St Marks for a variety of fun outdoor activities.

We were really pleased that by September we were able to camp out at Rough Close Scout Camp for the first time since 2019. The camp was a combined Beaver, Cub and Scout event so with plenty of parental support was a great success and thankfully the weather was kind. This also gave us a chance to give our new tent stock a first run out after the fundraising pre-lockdown meant we could refresh some of our gear.

For the Autumn and Spring terms we have largely been back to normal service, teaching Skills for Life, including First Aid, safety, fire lighting, cooking and crafts; learning about the world around us including other countries, space, environment and natural disasters; and fun, games and team-building.

Some District events have returned, the Scouts joined the Leamington Remembrance parade in November, and in March the Cubs and Scouts enjoyed the return and 50th Anniversary of the Leamington District Gang Show, WAGS, at the Spa Centre.

In May we will be heading to Ragley Hall for Get In 2022, the Warwickshire Scouts County Camp, where more than 4000 Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Leaders will spend the weekend camping and doing amazing activities.

Attendance is still strong amongst the young people in the Scout Group but the need for Adult help in uniform is becoming quite acute as jobs and personal situations change.

As always, thanks to all at the church for their support and flexibility in accommodating us.

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**“From Christ the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4: 16**

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**St Mark's Church**  
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