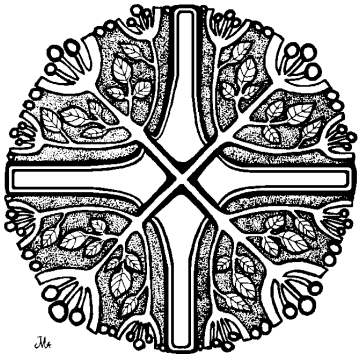
The Quarterly Magazine

St. Mary's, Carden Place

Trinity 2026



Ordinary time is still busy time at St. Mary's!

A new advert has gone into the Church Times not just for St. Mary's but for all the vacancies in the diocese, so we'll see what results that might produce. If you would like to join in communal prayer for a good result in this new recruitment campaign, come to the back of the church around 9am on a Sunday and pray with Erikka and Julia. The Diocese has suggested these words for your private prayer:

> *Loving Lord,*
> *We look to you as the Shepherd of the Church.*
> *In your mercy, send us a priest who will lead us in love of you and of our neighbour.*
> *Guide our search.*
> *Open the heart of the one you are calling and prepare us to welcome them.*
> *In your name we pray.*
> *Amen.*

The vestry are looking after the rectory and its little garden, where the weeds are growing very well! If you'd like to help, talk to a vestry member and see the sign-up sheet in the choir vestry. It's a pretty little garden with some good roses and a few currant bushes, and it doesn't take too much work to make it neat and tidy.

Work continues on our East End garden, though unfortunately the contractor has not been very well recently. We hope he'll recover to take advantage of the good weather, so that the gardener can plant the newly refurbished spaces for us soon. See David's report on the next page.

Remember that July is the month for Soap Sundays and September for Soup Sundays – there are more details below.

You'll have noticed in the last few years more references to the Season of Creation in our services and sermons. This is something many churches are now adopting following an old practice in the Orthodox Church, giving us a chance to give thanks for all the good things God gives us in this world. This culminates in our Harvest Festivals. It has not been formally adopted as yet by the Scottish Episcopal Church, but it's still a good opportunity to take note of God's creation and our role in it – look out for more references this year. By good fortune there are two events during this season which combine our diocesan Christian Life work and the Season of Creation – a Creation lunch reflecting on the subject of **Land** on 24th August (St James, Holburn Junction, 12 noon - 2 pm with a free lunch) and a **Songs of Praise Service** to celebrate the Feast of God the Creator, in St. Mary's, 30th August, 4pm. The preacher will be the Rt. Revd Bonnie Perry, Bishop of Michigan. Please let the Diocesan Office know of your attendance and any dietary requirements either by using the form available in the Choir Vestry or via office@aberdeen.anglican.org.

The Editor

EAST GARDEN PROJECT UPDATE

At the time of writing this short update the landscaping phase of the East Garden Project is well underway. This article will explain the work completed so far.

Repointing works

In late 2025 the repointing of the east elevation buttresses was carried out by GW Cheyne. This element of the project work was completed early in the new year.

Although not part of the original East Garden Project, the Vestry decided to repoint the south elevation where the corridors leads from the kitchen to the toilets. Our building contractors, GW Cheyne, had noted a lot of cracked pointing in this area and especially on the false chimney on this elevation. We are hopeful that this repair work will now stop the water ingress around the window in the corridor.

Drainage repairs

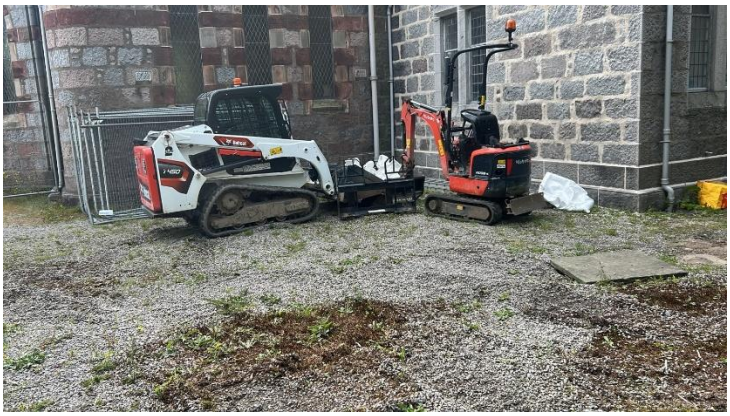
In May Drain Surgeons tackled the drainage repairs in the area east of the church. There was a small amount of excavation work to access the drainage system, but most of the repairs were carried out using sophisticated robotic equipment. We even have the CCTV videos to show the repairs, and these were examined by our architect, Dave Chouman, to his satisfaction that the repairs were well done.

Groundworks and clearance of the border

By late May our landscaping contractor, Landscaping in Aberdeen, had installed safety fencing around the site and begun the clearance work. In the first week of June the old paving slabs were quickly lifted and the vegetation in the border had been stripped back. A scrape of the ground had been completed across the whole site and all debris had been removed. Rather cleverly the lorry that took away the debris delivered a load of topsoil for the border on the same trip.

Early in June our benches for the new garden arrived from Wales where they had been manufactured by StreetMasters. You can see them safely stored in the nave!

During the clearance work our architect, Dave Chouman has spotted some building materials from the bomb-damaged Sanctuary block, and this has been kept aside for future display in St Mary's.



Tree protection advice

After the clearance work was completed a site visit was arranged with the arborist, Struan Dalgleish, who provided our tree protection report. Tree roots on the surface area where the old pathway had been removed were quite visible in a number of areas. This led the arborist to advise against the use of concrete when the new pathway is constructed.

This has meant research into a new approach for the pathway construction by our landscaping contractor. The base for the new path is being finalised, as this article is being typed, to suit the uncovered tree roots to enable them to continue growing without disturbing the new path.

Preparations for the landscaping works

As we move into July the levels across the site are being established so that the new construction can proceed. Materials for the pathway, labyrinth and borders are all now in the landscaper's warehouse ready for delivery to site as required.

The design for the Sunday School Garden has been agreed and a planting plan provided by Joanne Evans of Gerbera Designs, our border planting designer.

The Vestry has also given approval for the planting phase of the project to enable the garden designer to order the 160 plus plants required for the border and the Sunday School Garden at the most appropriate time.

Timeline adjustment

With a new technical solution required for the pathway our project timeline has slipped by a few weeks. Fortunately, timeline slippage isn't a big issue for us. The project team meet each week to discuss the next stage of activity and to ensure that everyone is fully aware of

the project status. Landscaping works will proceed throughout July, so please keep an eye open for progress when you next visit St Mary's.

Acknowledgements

St Mary's gratefully acknowledges the generous support received from:

- SEC Provincial Building Grant Fund
- Anderson Trust
- Benefact Trust
- The Mushroom Trust

We also thank congregation members who supported St Mary's Gift Days in 2023, 2024, and 2025. We are also very grateful to those congregation members that have responded to our East Garden Project Appeal.

David Rose

CONFIRMATION!

Erikka Askeland and Hamish Thomson were confirmed at St. James' on 20th June. Here Erikka reflects on her preparation for confirmation and the day itself:

When I got an email from Reverend Roger that Bishop Anne was holding a confirmation service in June, I felt called. I had been baptised over forty years ago in what felt like another life, in another country and in another denomination. The Scottish Episcopal Church and St Mary's has offered me a way back to faith and a spiritual home. So I took the plunge.

As part of the preparation, Rev Roger set out a "30-day confirmation challenge". Each day he set us a small task. Reader, I tried to do all of them – I confess sometimes I was catching up and some I missed. But it was such a valuable process. I also tried to add in some daily Bible readings from the SEC calendar.

Here are some of the notes I kept along with some of questions Roger asked us to think about each day.

Days 1-10 are Inward - Where is God in your life?

Day 1 (22/5): Think about the last 24 hours. What has God given you that has brought you joy? Name it and give thanks.

Our new rescue cat, Hoochie Cat, has been increasingly affectionate and she was astounded by a new toy. Simple pleasures with one of God's creatures.

Hearing from and making a plan with my friend to see her and her sons who are like nephews to me.

Coming home to my husband from a late event and he was still awake for a chat and a welcome home.

Meeting and interviewing Judy Murray in a beautiful place, wearing my favourite dress with old shoes that were perfect. I got compliments!

I have health and strength and confidence and a place in the world.

All of these moments are a gift of God. Thanks be to God!

Day 2 (23/5): Reflect on your experience of going to church. Where in church or during worship do you feel God's presence?

Should this be an overwhelming feeling?

I've certainly felt drawn to the Church and that is God's work.

Some sermons make me feel closer to God – at Christmas +Anne talked about mysteries and the three wise men guided by a star, which was intellectually stimulating but also felt like the opening of a spiritual window.

Sometimes it is just the weather, but the light at St Mary's sometimes also feels like a message from the divine.

Sometimes I feel a deep well of emotion and tears well up. It happens during hymns or when I knelt before the Cross before Easter.

I should probably figure out what this is deep inside me.

God open this deep well and shine your light on me.

Ezekiel 36:

A new heart I will give you.
And a new spirit will put within you.
And I will remove from your body the heart of stone.
And give you a heart of flesh.

Day 3 (24/5): Who introduced you to Jesus? How did they introduce you to Jesus?

I remember – a fragment of a memory – sitting next to our Christmas tree and telling the story of Christmas and the Baby Jesus. I recall feeling earnest about it, but I have no idea

where I had heard it (or how indeed how garbled my retelling must have been). At that time we didn't go to church.
When we started attending church with my aunt and cousins, it was there I started to believe and understand more about my faith.

Day 4 (25/5): Think of your life. When did you feel close to God? When have you felt far away? What brought you home?

I love church rituals to bring me closer to God – prayer and communion in particular and the feeling of process when I can start each week renewed.

When I stopped going to church as a teenager I was angry. And sad. I rejected Him and sought to find my own way. I questioned. I wondered about the souls of those who were before Christ and the people after his crucifixion who did not hear the Gospel. I let my feelings about the imperfect people who used His name to hate, belittle and scorn others get between me and the Lord (those people still make me angry).

I wanted to come back. It was my husband who first showed me it was possible to love God and not take Old Testament attitudes.

Forest Church gave me a safe space outside church walls to open myself up to him again, like a river flowing back to the ocean.

Sometimes old habits mean I forget to praise him endlessly. But when I do, I'm full of thanks.

Day 5 (26/5): What is your favourite piece of the Bible? What do you like about it?

Hard to pick a fav but the start of the book of John.
It has a great intro. Strong.
It speaks of a mystery – the very essence of the beginning of time and creation, light and darkness and language.
So much to ponder: He is word, life, light.
It is Jesus, it is God, it is one in three.
Beautiful.

Day 6 (27/5): Write a thank you note, email or message to someone who's been influential in your faith life.

Dear Bishop Anne
I owe you a note to say thank you for rekindling the love of God in me.
The love has helped to clear away the dead wood that had grown and hardened, thick with the misogyny and homophobia of the church in which I was raised which preached damnation unless you chose the narrow gate.
Your very presence as a leader inspired a thaw. Then getting to know you and hearing you speak of the resilience and joy of your faith through some of the most awful circumstances continued the job.
At first I wished to defend and support you (I still do). But as I came inside the church to do so, there was Jesus.
I have found my way back.

Thank you for your guiding light.

Day 29 - Today is your Confirmation! Reflect on the last 29 days. How do you feel different?

Setting aside time in a more intentional way to consider God, pray, read, discuss and explore my faith has knitted together strands of my life in a distinct and unusual pattern but which makes me feel more whole and more resilient.

The people with whom I have shared my news about today have shared my joy and their well wishes have been wonderful. The body of Christ is indeed a wonderful thing to be a part of.

I bought a tiny silver cross at a charity shop today to wear to the service and it felt like another moment of the Holy Spirit acting in my life.

Day 30 - Reflect on yesterday's service. What was the most inspirational part of the Confirmation for you? Where did you see or feel God?

I found the service joyful and often very emotional.

I was particularly moved to tears as the Bishop reminded us God loves and had planned us from the very beginning.

Psalm 139 13,14:
For you created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.

When I arrived in church today a friend asked if I felt any different. I said yes.

I saw another friend in the afternoon, we prayed together in her garden and enjoyed the sunshine and a delightful visit from a little red squirrel.

It all felt like Grace.

Erikka Askeland

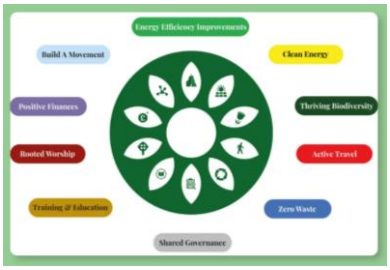
NET ZERO UPDATE

REMEMBER THE THREE CS – COMFORT, COST AND CLIMATE

We've been continuing to investigate options for improving the comfort of St. Mary's, particularly in colder weather, with some degree of efficiency. There still don't seem to be very viable options, even for those with very deep pockets, and so we're thinking about mitigation – more long cushions on pews, and perhaps carpet on parts of the floor at least experimentally. For these minor works we still have to have permission from the diocese and so this is the next step. The good news is that we are now on a green tariff for our electricity – the gas is a bit more problematic!

Julia, after a great deal of hard work on this project in recent weeks, has stepped down from the team due to other commitments – thanks to her for her contributions.

Nick Mills
Ed Stephens
Freddie Stephens



HOW PREPARED ARE WE TO SEE AND HEAR?

I am God's Child
I am Lavished in Love
I am Gifted with Grace
I am Showered with Mercy
I am Overflowing with Hope

The above words read, sound and feel like a Garden of Paradise. Nothing unwelcoming, nothing to avoid, nothing to stop the embrace of a Father God to His children (you and me).

In the beginning Adam and Eve would have received a similar welcome and loving embrace as God gifted them everything in the Garden as far as their eyes could see. However, there is this 'but', a 'do not eat from this one tree', it's not good for you. Therein lies the opportunity for temptation to enter in. My granddaughter, Georgia, has lived her life seeing a picture I bought from a Vatican shop in Rome, Wenzel Peter's *Adamo ed Eva nel Paradiso Terrestre*. I am used to her pointing out aspects she sees, the animals living side by side, how beautiful everything is – an ideal heaven, humans and animals co-existing in harmony side by side. Interestingly, a week ago Georgia asked a question that surprised me: 'Why are they not wearing any clothes?' I had to take another look at the painting and she was right. I had become so comfortable with everything in the Garden that I hadn't noticed their nakedness.

(Wikipedia)

In preparation for writing this article I felt a theme develop, so I explored further people in the Bible, Old and New Testaments who have also experienced moments of 'Ah ha! now I see or hear what God or Jesus means'. For example, Moses, hoping that no one saw him killing a guard, and not seeing what the outcome of leading the people out of slavery into freedom could look like.

Young Samuel (Hannah's son) and the prophet Eli also came to mind. Samuel kept waking thinking he was hearing Eli calling for him. Eli kept returning Samuel to his bed. Eventually, Eli realised it was God calling Samuel and told him to say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening'.

Mary, when speaking with the Angel, did not look for the bigger picture of 'what ifs': rather she stayed with the answer in the very moment the question was put to her.

I believe internal seeing or hearing is the trusted way forward, in other words the 'I am' or inner 'I', because neither is distracted by the worldly environment of fear, unbelief, lack of trust, etc.

Peter is a great example of someone who mis-saw not only his own life Jesus' life too, so much so that he didn't believe he would ever deny knowing Jesus. Thankfully, Jesus knew better and wasn't surprised by what happened. Peter's inner 'I' wasn't finely enough tuned yet to hear.

I am currently preparing myself to see again following cataract surgery on both eyes. People are saying I should get a stick that picks up 'things' so I don't have to bend as bending isn't advised, I've reorganised cupboards so 'things' are within reach, I've had conversations with family about how different it is going to feel when I can fully see their faces and the emotions on their faces again, and how to manage the list of do and don'ts during the four weeks of recovery.

However, it is during this period of not seeing that I believe I am actually seeing better from my inner 'I' perspective. For example, I've turned to hearing the Bible being spoken to me daily during a Bible Study plan, and recently I've heard a book read to me. Both of these experiences have produced a freedom I never expected, namely, a freedom to hear better from within without visual clues to distract me. I'm loving the spoken word of the Bible. I

loved hearing the voice of one of the authors of *Rewired*, a new book I was keen to read. Importantly, I am loving the freedom within me to embrace the spoken word. My heart healing is strengthening and developing myself. I am discovering a way, a pathway into a land of rewriting past stories that were associated with seeing, but now come through hearing. I'm also rediscovering the vibrancy of colours which thankfully I see very clearly. I love going out into the countryside and seeing the fields of colour and the plants in my garden as they burst into flower. Now I know this touches and is seen by a deeper part of me.

Saul had to lose his sight to gain access to his inner 'I'. This prompted him to ask three questions: 'Who are you, Lord?'; 'What do you want me to do?' and 'What shall I do, Lord?' (Acts 26:18). Internally Saul's inner self knew exactly who the Lord is, and once he was released and distanced from the outer eye he knew and acknowledged the Lord, and Saul's life and name completely changed. Paul became a strong warrior for God, and as he heard the Lord's words this brought about changes for the better and for future generations to come, for example, eating all meat and end to circumcision.

I've warmed to Paul. Through listening to Acts being read I've developed a deeper sense of how he used his past 'warrior' to become a warrior for the Lord and converted and healed many people, because he was following a Lord who not only redeemed his sight but brought new life, sight, understanding and compassion to channel his inner warrior for good. What also touches and amazes me is how patient the Lord was in waiting for this transformation to take place.

Take heart everyone, trust your inner 'I', it can see and hear well:

'Wait for the Lord: be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.' Psalm 27:14

God Bless
Margaret McKinnon

FUNDRAISING FUN!

Tomato seedlings have all been snapped up and are in their new homes, so let's hope for another good crop this year!

Soap Sundays will be running throughout July – this is your chance to donate soap, shampoo, deodorant, hand cream, toothpaste and other products to a local foodbank. Brace yourself, too, for Soup Sundays (not to be confused with Soap Sundays!) throughout September. Unlike our tin Christmas tree, for Soup Sundays we're not at all fussy about the size or shape of the tins or even packets!

Note that St. Mary's Gift Day will be on our patronal festival, this year celebrated on 16th August.

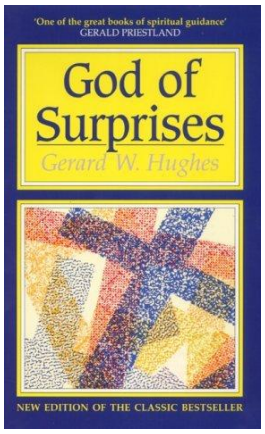
SOCIAL EVENTS

Since our last magazine, we've had our Ladies' and Gents' Evenings in May and our Cheese and Wine in June. The reports say that all were very enjoyable!

Our next social event will be the Harvest Bring & Share Lunch on Sunday, 4th October – look out for sign-up sheets nearer the time.

BOOK REVIEW:

Book Review: Gerard W. Hughes, *God of Surprises*



'It is written especially for bewildered, confused or disillusioned Christians, who have a love-hate relationship with the Church to which they belong, or once belonged.' Taking the image of looking for the treasure buried in an unpromising field – ourselves – and setting itself up as a guidebook to that treasure, this book is in some ways a guidebook to life, albeit one that does not follow a straight path but spirals and wiggles along the way, as the God of Surprises enters into our being. There are exercises to do, prayer methods to explore, explorations of the distractions which keep us from God and what to do about them, how to overcome despair and disillusion when the journey and the treasure hunt are not as easy as we had

hoped. I've had this book recommended to me by people who have been confused or depressed or a bit ashamed of the way they think they are failing at faith, and I think it works for all three. Some of it is very funny as well as thought-provoking – a lengthy letter from an imaginary parish priest refusing to recommend Mr. E. Manuel for training as a priest, and giving a long account of why he is so unsuitable, is amusing but makes us wonder how Jesus would be accepted if He appeared in human form again today. Other anecdotes show us how our sometimes warped perception of the divine – warped sometimes through childhood misunderstandings or misconceptions – can damage us and others, and lead us away from God. The book reminds us that we are God's beloved creation, and helps the reader ultimately to find the treasure of God in themselves.

If you have seen an interesting play or film or read a thought-provoking book and would like to tell us about it, please contact the editor.

FOUR GARDENS IN ITALY

As the work starts on our Sunday School garden and Labyrinth at St Mary's I thought I would share the inspiration of our recent visit to a selection of different gardens near Rome. There is something about a garden that is so beautiful, calm and individual to each place. God walked in the Garden of Eden and on our recent trip to Italy, the garden at Ninfa felt like a little bit of heaven on earth. We visited four gardens, Villa Lante, Villa d'Este, Giardino Barberini and Ninfa. Often we think of our gardens as work and weeding and never good enough, but this time of year especially it is good to step back and look at the plants around us and see that 'it is good' even when it is not world famous.

Each garden had a very different character. Our first garden was Villa Lante, near Viterbo. It is an iconic 'Mannerist' late Renaissance garden with an amazing cascade of fountains and wonderful sculptures. Sadly, the fountains, being somewhat elderly, were having their pipes renewed but the layout and placing of stone sculptures and buildings was very beautiful.

The Fountain of the Four Moors with the villa in the background. Photo by Paolo Monti, 1965.

The Fountain of Pegasus

In contrast, the water was definitely flowing at the Tivoli Gardens in Villa d'Este. This is a marvel of human ingenuity from the imagination of Pirro Ligorio and the purchasing power of Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este of Ferrara in the 16th century. It is a UNESCO world heritage site. Tivoli is an amazing water garden with extraordinary fountains huge and small on the side of two steep slopes. The water features came in rows, circles and staircases, all without any electricity, some vast,

some quiet and intimate. A true example of man-made imagination, ingenuity and magnificence.

Our next garden was Giardino Barberini, where the Pope wisely goes for his Tuesday ‘day off’. It is in the village of Gandolfo on the lip of a lake in a stunning volcanic crater. There were huge trees, citrus laden with oranges in vast terracotta pots, views across the countryside and a spectacular parterre with its very own labyrinth made of small box hedges. Pope Francis established the Borgo Laudato Si’ (Praise be to You) programme here as an educational and training hub for environmental sustainability, integral ecology and land stewardship.

Our last outing was to Ninfa, the site of a village abandoned because of malaria back in medieval times. It is hard to find, and you cannot visit without a booked guide which contributes to the peaceful atmosphere. On the day of our visit, we met a couple of lost Austrians who had managed to find it with difficulty but had no tickets, so we absorbed them into our tour group so they could come in!

Originally this was a Roman village, then the site of a Papal coronation in 1159, but it fell into complete disrepair with abandoned buildings due to malarial swamps in the 16th century and was finally abandoned in 1765. Gradually the swamps were drained but the village was never rebuilt. Gelasio Caetani bought the land after the First World War and with the help of an English gardener, Ada Bootle-Wilbraham, created a unique garden of sublime romantic beauty. Everywhere we looked were beautiful trees, flowers and artistic ruins. The crystal clear water supports both brown trout and Mediterranean trout which could be seen swimming in its calm waters. The trees were incredibly mature despite having only been planted within the last hundred years. This is due to the rich volcanic soil, pure water and mild climate. It was a complete contrast to the structured gardens of the 16th and 17th century and is a balm for the soul. Some have called it ‘the most romantic garden in the world’.

Perhaps, because we all know the time and effort it takes to make a beautiful garden, it makes us appreciate all the more when we can just sit or walk and take time to be in a garden. I hope you have enjoyed a little taste of four Italian gardens, but closer to home there are many beautiful gardens here in the North East and I would recommend taking a look at the Scottish Open Gardens Scheme to see if you are passing somewhere when it is open and could take a moment to experience a different place. https://scotlandsgardens.org/find-a-garden/

Julia House

HELPING OUT AT ST. MARY'S

Whether you're new to St. Mary's or have been coming along for a while, you might be wondering if there are ways you can get involved in the life of the church – it can be lots of fun! We're always looking for people to join the rota for intercessions or reading, or helping out with the flowers or cleaning or the coffee after our 10am service on a Sunday, or perhaps you'd like to help with the sound and make sure we can hear what's going on?

So for readings and intercessions talk to Iain, usually to be found at the door.
For coffee, sign up in the choir vestry for dates to suit you.
For sound, talk to Malcolm or Graham – you'll find one or other of them with an I pad at the 10am service.
For flowers or cleaning, talk to Nick, usually near the back, too.
Anything else you're interested in, talk to a vestry member – ask anyone to point them out.

ACCOUNTS

	April 2026	*May 2026*
Income:	3,822	4,292
Expenditure:	12,348	2,980
Net result for month:	-8,526	1,312
Balance unrestricted funds:	71,765	
Balance restricted funds:	21,582	
Balance at month end:	£93,349	

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Rector: vacancy

Assistant Priests: Rev. Jason Hobbs, Rev. Roger Dyer (for pastoral matters please contact on 07719 458571 or revrogdyer@btinternet.com)

Rector's Warden: John Cooke

People's Warden: Iain Stewart

Vestry Secretary: David Rose

Vestry Treasurer: Lydia Ross

Lay Representative: Nicola Mills

Sacristan: Anne Farquhar

Organist: vacancy

Protection of Vulnerable Groups Co-ordinator: Graham Thomson

Flower Convener: (please contact Nicola Mills for now)

Church Office (01224 561383) stmaryscardenplace@gmail.com

Online:www.stmaryscardenplace.org.uk / Facebook.com/stmaryscardenplace

The deadline for the next magazine, our Harvest 2026 issue, will be 28th September. Copy when required to Nicola Mills, or telephone 01224 488700, or e-mail to palaeography@aol.com. Thank you!

Your Magazine

You can order your St. Mary's News to be sent to you each quarter by e-mail, or ask for a Large Print version, or ask for any back copies of editions you may have missed. Just contact the Editor!

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Carden Place, is a charity (Scottish Charity No. SCO 14062).