

st mary's wootton

Knowing Jesus,
making Jesus known to all



PARISH PROFILE



St Mary's is a vibrant, Bible-centred church in the growing village of Wootton, Bedfordshire. We long to reach out with the good news about Jesus' saving love to all who live nearby.

We are looking for a vicar who loves the Lord and his people, is committed to faithful Bible teaching, dependent on the Lord in prayer, and passionate about reaching the lost.

WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

- A committed disciple of Jesus Christ, deeply grateful for God's mercy and grace, amazed at being saved.
- A servant leader, seeking to be like Jesus and to point others to Jesus.
- Someone with a pastoral heart for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Someone who treasures the Bible as God's word to us and as our ultimate authority in everything.
- Someone with a heart for youth and children's work, loves children and young people and has a passion to see them grow.
- A team player, part of the church family.

WHAT WE WOULD LOVE TO DO TOGETHER

- Preach the Bible faithfully and clearly, so that the church will grow in faith and love for Jesus Christ.
- Prioritise weekly expository preaching as the way lives are transformed by God's Spirit.
- Train leaders to teach the Bible and share the gospel.
- Equip the church for works of ministry to build up the body of Christ.
- Encourage the deep discipleship of church members, helping them be active in church life – especially in growth groups and in prayer – and to grow in their own walk with Christ.
- Engage sensitively and respectfully with those who hold different views.
- Seek to encourage an outward-focused church, to equip and encourage the church in evangelism to reach the community with the good news.
- Develop our vision for proclaiming the gospel as the village and surrounding area grows and changes, and think strategically about the new mission opportunities.
- Take seriously the responsibilities of safeguarding.

CONTENTS

Who we are looking for	2
What we would love to do together . .	2
CONTENTS	3
THE HEART OF THE CHURCH.	4
Who we are	4
CHURCH INFORMATION.	6
Our membership	6
How we do church	7
How we would support you	12
Other important areas.	13
Our buildings	14
WOOTTON AND THE LOCAL AREA . . .15	15
Wootton village	15
Stewartby village	16
Future developments	17
Education	17
NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE18	18
Strengths.	18
Challenges	18
Vision for the future	19



THE HEART OF THE CHURCH



WHO WE ARE

St Mary's exists to glorify Almighty God through the proclamation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to all people, and through the pastoral care of members of the congregation and the local community. This is our mission, privilege and joy, which we sum up as:

Knowing Jesus and making Jesus known to all.

We are a friendly, vibrant church in the growing village of Wootton. We want to share God's love as revealed in the Bible. There is an active church membership of all ages – from babies to those in their nineties – who attend services regularly and are involved in midweek activities, with new faces frequently joining us.

OUR VISION

Our vision is for St Mary's to become a united body of worshipping disciples, rooted in the Bible and prayer, growing together in holiness and every-member ministry to become a family of:

- **Loving care** Welcoming and caring for one another with the love of Jesus Christ.
- **Passionate proclamation** Reaching the people of Wootton, Stewartby and beyond, with the good news of Jesus Christ.
- **Glad service** Dedicated to being salt and light in the world for Jesus Christ.
- **Global heart** Supporting the worldwide mission of making Jesus known, including sending men and women into gospel ministry.
- **Sacrificial change** Giving generously of ourselves to realise this vision.



THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

OUR VALUES

We believe that we are reconciled to God the Father through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and therefore we value:

- **The Bible** The written word of God and our supreme authority in following Jesus in the whole of life.
- **Prayer** The prime expression of faith in Jesus and of our dependence on God's loving grace and sovereign power in all things.
- **Church** A family of wholehearted worshippers and disciples of Jesus Christ committed to mutual encouragement, care, and accountability.
- **Evangelism** The proclamation of the good news of God's salvation in Christ for all people.
- **Service** A family of God's people caring for people in Wootton and Stewartby and beyond with the love of Christ.

OUR IDENTITY

■ We are Christ's church

The church is the bride and body of Jesus Christ; it is through him alone, revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, that we know God; it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we worship and serve Christ; and it is Christ's future return which is our hope and motivation for life.

■ We are a local church

A full and authentic expression of the universal church, called into being and sustained by God's word. We have a specific responsibility to proclaim and demonstrate the love of God in Christ among the people of the parish of Wootton. We are also called to involvement with the world-wide mission of the whole church.

■ We are an Anglican church

While we welcome Christians of all backgrounds, our permanent and most visible connection is with the Church of England. We accept and uphold its founding documents (The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal) as authentic expressions of orthodox Christian belief. We are committed to supporting and encouraging biblical faith and practice in the Anglican Communion, both within and beyond the diocese of St Albans.

■ We are an evangelical church

We recognise the convictions of historic evangelicalism as crystallising and expressing the kernel of orthodox Christianity, including:

- the supreme authority of Scripture;
- the universal nature of human sin;
- the grace of God, seen above all in the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ;
- the gift of justification and new life in Christ, received and enjoyed only through repentance and faith.

We value the examples, among others, of the 16th-century reformers, the 18th-century evangelists, and the 19th-century social reformers. We are committed to gospel partnership with evangelical mission agencies, as well as with our patron, the Martyrs' Memorial and Church of England Trust, and the Church Pastoral Aid Society.

CHURCH INFORMATION



The PCC requested alternative spiritual oversight from the Church of England Evangelical Council, and support is now being provided by Revd Canon Vaughan Roberts, Rector of St Ebbe's Church, Oxford.

As a church we are a member of the **Evangelical Alliance**.

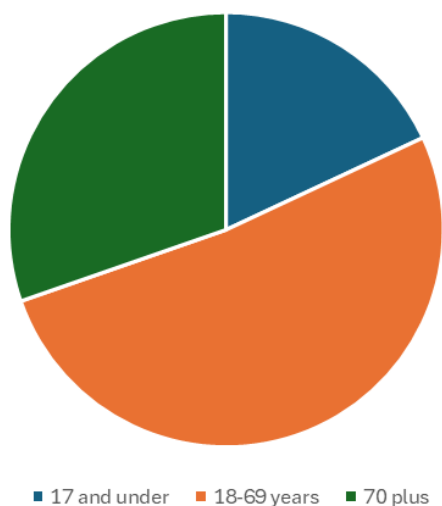
OUR MEMBERSHIP

St Mary's has a congregation made up of all ages. Most live in Wootton, with around 15% travelling from nearby villages. Visitors to St Mary's regularly comment on how welcome they feel.

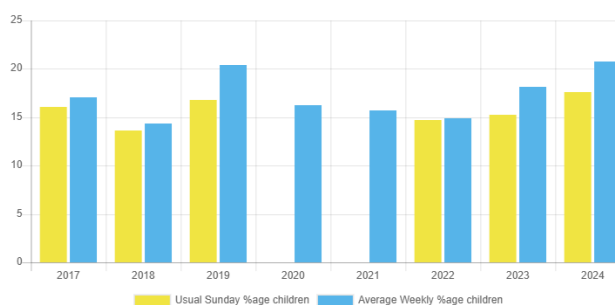
- In 2024, we welcomed ten new members.
- Following its revision in 2025, we have 89 on the electoral roll (prior to revision, the roll stood at 134).
- 108 recently asked to remain on our mailing list and receive our Fortnightly Bulletin.
- On each Sunday in 2024, we averaged around 70 adults and 16 children.

The congregation reflects the cultural make up of Wootton as a village, as mentioned in the **census information on page 15**.

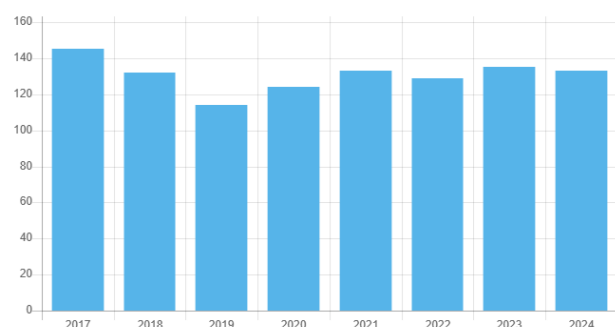
Age profile of church family



Children under sixteen



Electoral roll



CHURCH INFORMATION

HOW WE DO CHURCH

SERVICES

We have one main Sunday service at 10am. A service of The Lord's Supper takes place on the first Sunday each month, with all-age services on the second Sunday. We follow different series of Bible books in the tradition of expository preaching. We seek to be accessible, and so our clergy don't wear robes. We ask preachers to wear a jacket with open necked shirt (or clerical collar).

A mixture of contemporary songs and traditional hymns are led by the worship band or the organ; both are used in the majority of services. The service is supported with readers and intercessors from within the congregation.



Children remain in the service for the first ten to fifteen minutes, before going into their own groups (Climbers, Explorers and Pathfinders), except for at all-age services. After the service, a time of fellowship is encouraged over tea and coffee. The service is supported by sound amplification, projection and **live streaming** each week. A consistent and regular audience watch the livestream of our Sunday service.



CHURCH INFORMATION

PRAYER

We encourage prayer individually and at all of our gatherings, including attendance at monthly prayer meetings. We have a telephone and WhatsApp prayer chain which supports those with urgent prayer requests.

PASTORAL

Our pastoral care team coordinates support for those in particular need. The team have attended annual **Biblical Counselling UK** (BCUK) conferences in the last two years. A small group of people completed the **Crosslands Pastoral Care** course in 2024. In 2018 we worked through BCUK's **Real Change** course as a church. Whilst there is still room for improvement, we seek to make 'one anothering' part of our church culture.

Communion is also offered in the community for those who can not attend a regular service.

GROWTH GROUPS

We have five regular midweek groups, attended by around half of the congregation, which meet in homes to support and encourage one another in Bible study and prayer.



CHURCH INFORMATION

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Sunday groups We have three children's groups for ages 2–14 years, regularly attended by fifteen to twenty children. Groups are run by an experienced and growing team of volunteers, overseen by our part-time youth & children's worker.

JAM We run a fortnightly term-time group, led by our youth & children's worker, for young people aged 13–18, with a small but faithful group of teenagers attending. The group attends *Sorted*, an annual event in London run by **Capital Youthworks**.

Holiday club For over thirty years, St Mary's annual summer holiday club has run for local children aged from reception to Year 8. The event runs for four mornings during a week in August at our Church Hall. It is led by our youth & children's worker and staffed by a team of about 40 volunteers. Approximately 100 children attend. Holiday club is very popular and well-regarded within the local community.



Youth residential St Mary's partners with the Anglican church in Cranfield to run an annual residential trip for young people aged 9–13. This is held at the **Chellington Centre**, Bedfordshire, during the Easter holidays.

In the recent past, a few children have attended **CPAS Ventures** holidays.

Our youth & children's worker attends the annual **Growing Young Disciples** conference and regularly engages with **Faith in Kids** training and materials.



CHURCH INFORMATION

MISSION

The PCC tithes its income from regular giving to support Christian mission beyond the parish. Our **Mission Partners** can be found on our website.

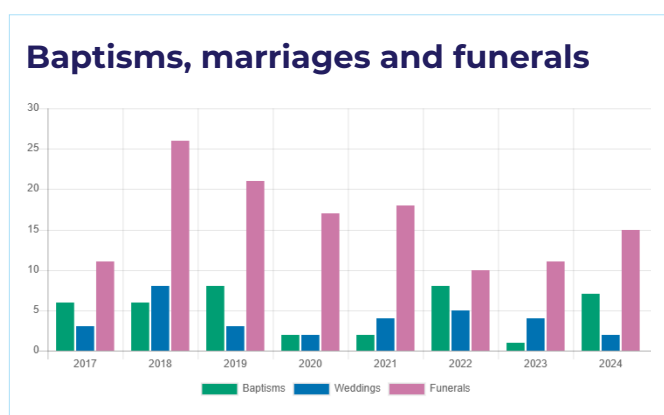
Throughout the year, there are opportunities for the congregations to support other agencies such as **Tearfund**, **The Word for the World**, **Bedford Foodbank**, and the **SMART Prebend Centre** in Bedford.

Over the years, St Mary's has run a number of outreach initiatives in the local community. In the past, we have been part of some larger local evangelistic events such as *Hope in Bedford* and *A Passion for Life*.

We aim to run **Christianity Explored** courses, usually in January & September. A team of volunteers run **Open the Book** in the local primary school.

OCCASIONAL SERVICES

From January to December 2024 there were seven baptisms, two weddings and fifteen funerals held at St Mary's or Bedford Crematorium.



In 2024 we welcomed 269 people to our Christmas services and events.



CHURCH INFORMATION

OTHER MINISTRY AREAS

St Mary's Preschool St Mary's owns and runs a preschool (rated Ofsted 'Good') which operates five days a week in our Church Hall. We have responsibility for all aspects of running the setting, but the day-to-day running is delegated to the managers and their management team. Two managers share the full-time position, there are also five Early Years practitioners, an administrator and a cleaner. It accommodates up to 32 children.

Ministry at Stewartby United Church This is a Local Ecumenical Project (LEP) provided under the terms of a Sharing Agreement, in which the Church of England and the Methodist Church are the remaining active partners. Licensed ministers and congregation members from St Mary's support Stewartby, leading the monthly Sunday afternoon service, speaking at the monthly T@3 event, serving on the church council and participating in other events.



Wootton charities As vicar at St Mary's you would become a trustee and chair of **Wootton Church Lands** (charity number 251368) and **Wootton Pools Land** (charity number 200216). These give financial assistance to the vulnerable within the civil Parishes of Wootton and Stewartby.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Lunch Club For those aged 50 and over, Lunch Club meets every month for a hot meal on Monday lunchtimes. It regularly attracts 40-50 people.

Church lunches The church family regularly get together for lunch in the Church Hall, vicarage garden or in the church yard.

Away days and weekends We aim to have a church family day (or weekend) away at least once every two years.

A group attend **Bible by the Beach** each year, and people also attend events run by **Four Counties Gospel Partnership**, of which St Mary's is a member.

CHURCH INFORMATION

HOW WE WOULD SUPPORT YOU

THE EMPLOYED TEAM

St Mary's employs a staff team consisting of an **administrator** and a **youth & children's worker**, both part-time. Both have significant experience in their roles, and are committed and supportive members of the congregation and leadership team.

Good connections exist with other evangelical churches in the area, and ministers gather regularly for breakfast and prayer.

THE VOLUNTEER TEAM

Our church is supported by:

- two **retired clergy** with Permission to Officiate (PTO)
- a team of five **lay leaders of worship**, with one more soon to be commissioned
All of them regularly support by leading services. We enjoy welcoming visiting preachers and **Mission Partners**.
- two **church wardens** both in their third year of serving in the role
- six **wardens' assistants** and a **verger**

Standing Committee and Parochial Church Council (PCC) meet nine times a year. PCC has no vacancies, and is a vibrant, diverse and active team. We have three Deanery Synod representatives, and one member also serves as vice chair of Diocesan Board of Education.

Our PCC has several **subcommittees** which help to ensure the smooth running of the church. These include:

- Standing
- Finance
- Youth council
- Preschool management
- Premises & facilities team

St Mary's has a strong team of **volunteers** who help with the day-to-day running of the church. Teams include, amongst other areas:

- Sunday refreshments
- Sunday tech
- Sunday musicians
- Flowers
- Cleaning
- Safeguarding
- Youth & children's leaders
- Growth group leaders
- Pastoral care

All volunteers undertake relevant training and are safely recruited according to their role.

CHURCH INFORMATION

OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS

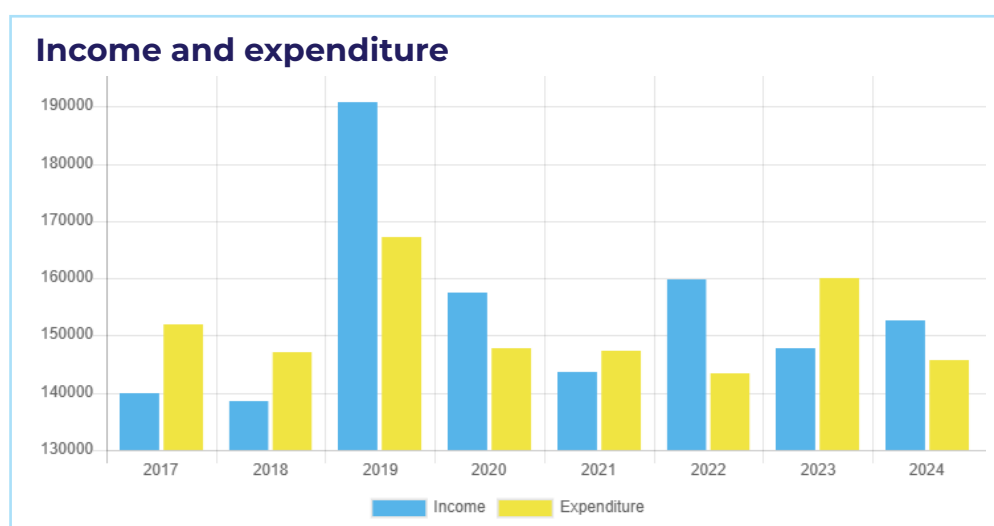
SAFEGUARDING

We take Safeguarding very seriously. Our policy and contact details of our Parish Safeguarding Officer and team can be found on our [website](#).

FINANCE

St Mary's currently has a reasonably healthy financial position with an unrestricted General Fund balance of approximately £22,500, and a restricted balance of approximately £245,300 (at the end of December 2024). The restricted fund is mainly a legacy left for the maintenance and restoration of the church building.

Our total income in 2024 was approximately £152,500 and our total expenditure £149,800.



We have 48 planned givers currently donating a regular monthly income of approximately £6,600.

In 2024, for the first time in many years, we were unable to pay the Parish Share to the Diocesan Board of Finance in full (£68,000 in 2024), owing to our income being lower than had been budgeted. Our shortfall was £11,572. But we anticipate we will return to paying in full in 2025.

Annual accounts can be seen in our [Annual Report for 2024](#).

CHURCH INFORMATION

OUR BUILDINGS

THE CHURCH BUILDING

St Mary's is a Grade I listed Church of England parish church. Originally dating from the 12th century, the current structure largely dates from the 14th and 15th centuries with significant Victorian restoration. Seating around 250, St Mary's features a nave, chancel and a twenty-metre tower topped with a spire, six bells and a chiming clock.

The churchyard is closed for burials, and is well-maintained by the Parish Council and volunteers.



VICARAGE

Built in 1965, the building has five double bedrooms, one bathroom, two separate toilets, large lounge-diner, good-sized kitchen, utility room, separate snug area and a study which can be accessed from the front door without entering any other part of the house. The property has gas central heating. There is an impressive garden with fruit trees, sheds, perimeter fence and entry gates on two sides. Main access is to the front of the property where there is parking for at least four cars.

CHURCH HALL

The church hall has a main hall area, kitchen, toilets (male, female and accessible), and a committee room. It has spacious grounds outside and is accessed via a small drive between houses opening into a large car park. The hall is rented to the preschool five days a week. It is used for many church events. The hall is separate from the church grounds.

OTHER PROPERTIES

9 Studley Road St Mary's owns a two-bedroom chalet-style detached residential house with garden and garage. The house is currently let to a member of the congregation.

WOOTTON AND THE LOCAL AREA



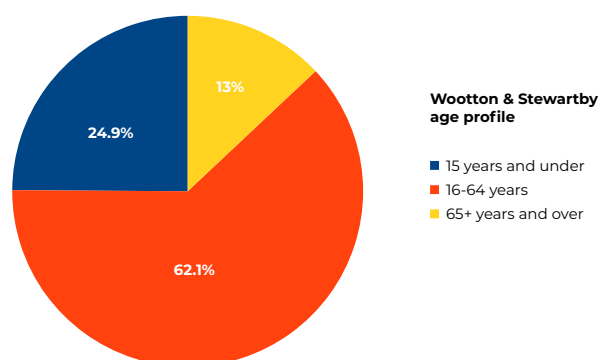
The Parish is made up of the villages of Wootton and Stewartby. The main ministry and mission of the church is in Wootton. There are currently no regular members of the congregation from Stewartby. We are very aware though that Stewartby presents a great mission field opportunity, which we would be open to explore.

WOOTTON VILLAGE

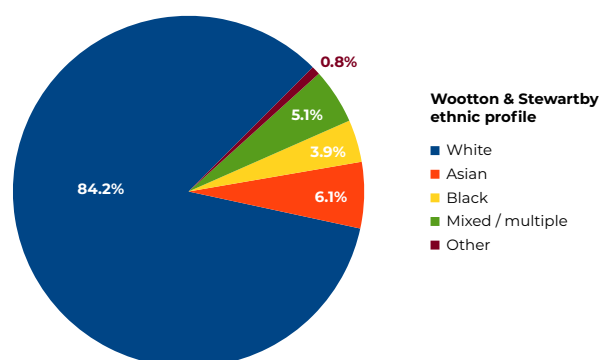
The village has a welcoming, close-knit rural character, offering a family-friendly atmosphere, good schools, and frequent community events. A variety of local groups and social activities bring residents together, fostering a strong sense of belonging.

The village has expanded rapidly. The civil parish of Wootton covers approximately 9,200 residents as of 2022, up from 4,156 in 2011 (due to the ongoing development of new homes). Alongside modern developments, Wootton contains a mix of historic timber-framed houses.

The **age profile** of Wootton is:



The **ethnic profile** is predominantly white:



In the 2021 census, 48% identified themselves as Christian and 41% as having no religion. Employment is relatively strong, with unemployment rates at roughly 2.7% in 2021.

Wootton is home to an active **Parish Council**, four local shops, four pubs, two chip shops, its own league football club, a Post Office, petrol station, barber, hairdresser, pharmacy, doctors' surgery, retirement community, and local businesses serving the community's everyday needs.

Based in the heart of the country, the area has excellent road, rail and bus networks connecting it to surrounding towns and cities and making it very accessible for commuters.

WOOTTON AND THE LOCAL AREA

Within Wootton there are two other smaller churches, **Wootton New Life Methodist Church** and **Wootton Baptist Church**. There are very good relationships between the churches.

A Wootton & Stewartby Churches Committee meets approximately three times per year. We periodically meet with them to read the Bible and pray and also join together to have a presence at community events.

STEWARTBY VILLAGE

Stewartby was built by the Stewart family as a model village for brickworks employees. Its red-brick homes and planned layout reflect its brickmaking heritage. Today, Stewartby remains a close-knit, friendly community with green spaces and active local groups. Its diverse population doubled from 2001 to 2021, reaching around 2,500, with 1,000 more homes planned.

There are two schools, a college, an existing preschool, a handful of shops, a memorial hall, a social club and several parks and recreational areas. Stewartby has a number of voluntary clubs and organisations.

Stewartby's church, built in the 1950s, became a Local Ecumenical Partnership with local ministers sharing services in the 1980s. **Stewartby United Church** now meets twice a month, has an afternoon tea service, and a joint service with Lidlinton Church. **Bethel Mar Thoma Church** also holds services there. It is part of the **Wootton & Stewartby Churches Group** and maintains strong local ties, with services regularly supported by St Mary's.



WOOTTON AND THE LOCAL AREA

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Planning is underway for a large **Universal Studios** theme park and resort to be built adjacent to Stewartby by 2031, bringing large numbers of people into the area, both permanently and temporarily. The development will have a transformative impact on Bedford and the UK economy; it is anticipated it will create 28,000 jobs when it opens, and would be one of the largest employers in the region. This project will have a big impact on the Parish, and comes with great evangelistic opportunities.

EDUCATION

Preschools There are three preschools within the village, including our own. St Mary's Preschool enjoys an annual Christmas service in church.

Wootton schools have been recently restructured to a two-tier system, having previously been part of the Bedfordshire three-tier system. There are:

- **Wootton Primary School** (rated Ofsted 'Good' in 2024), part of Chiltern Learning Trust, is split across two sites with largely new buildings. They often attend St Mary's for Christmas and Easter services.
- **Wootton Upper School** (rated Ofsted 'Good' in 2024).
- **Kimberley College** (STEM, sixth form) in Stewartby (rated Ofsted 'Good' in 2023).

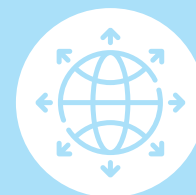
St Mary's also has links with Church of England school **Holywell Academy** (rated Ofsted 'Good' in 2023), located in nearby Cranfield. Holywell is a middle school, shortly to become a secondary school. We regularly lead assemblies and have several members on the governing body.

There are also post-16 educational opportunities in a college setting through the **Bedford College Group**, about six miles away.

Independent schools Bedford also has a large number of independent schools covering all ages.



NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE



STRENGTHS

One of our greatest strengths is the **warmth and hospitality** shown by our congregation. Whether you're a lifelong member or visiting for the first time, you'll be made to feel part of the family.

We have a long and cherished history of **children's ministry**, which continues to thrive. Our popular holiday club is a cornerstone of this work, offering children a fun, faith-filled environment where they can learn about God's love through stories, games, music, and crafts. This is supported by a passionate team of volunteers who give generously of their time and talents.

At the heart of our church is a **strong core of biblically grounded volunteer leaders** who faithfully serve in teaching, discipleship, and pastoral care. They help guide and equip our church family to grow in faith and service. In addition, our many small home Bible study groups provide opportunities for deeper fellowship, prayer, and learning, creating strong connections and spiritual growth throughout the week.

CHALLENGES

St Mary's is a faithful and committed church family, yet like many communities, we face several challenges.

One of our key desires is to deepen our **corporate prayer life**. We long to grow together in regular, united prayer as a church body, seeking God's guidance, strength, and vision for our shared mission.

Since the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also experienced a **reduction in the number of regular volunteers**. Many of our ministries continue to rely on a small, faithful group of people, and we recognise the need to encourage and raise up new volunteers to help carry forward the work of the church.

Another area we are prayerfully seeking to revive is our **evangelistic outreach**. Before the pandemic, we engaged more actively with the wider community through large evangelistic events and initiatives designed to share the gospel and invite people into the life of faith. We are now aware that once again we need to be more intentional about reaching out into our community, connecting with people where they are to share God's love with them.

NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

This year the PCC reviewed its plans for 2025 to 2027. It agreed to focus particularly on the following areas:

- **Retain and integrate newcomers** by intentional discipling and care, and increase numbers in growth groups.
- **Termly 'back to church' service and enquirers group**, easily accessible to people who do not regularly attend church. Publicise a beginners' course at these.
- **Further grow our youth work** with a midweek children's group for those in school years 7–11.
- **Continue to build relationships with all our mission partners** and build a relationship with a new core mission partner.
- **Promote an active prayer life** in the congregation.

In five years' time, we would love **to have grown numerically** and in depth of discipleship, **to see more children and young people** discovering the joy of following Christ, **to reach the many areas of Wootton and Stewartby** where the light of the gospel has not yet shone, and to be a church that increasingly seeks to obey Jesus' command **to make disciples of all nations**, to his glory.



**“LOVELY FAMILY CHURCH,
PEOPLE VERY KIND AND WELCOMING.”**

st mary's wootton



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**The Vicarage, Church Road,
Wootton, Bedford. MK43 9HF**



The Parochial Church Council of St Mary the Virgin, Wootton, Bedfordshire. Registered Charity 1150817.

St Mary's church is situated in the village of Wootton, Bedfordshire and is part of the Diocese of St Albans within the Church of England.

