

Report from St Mary's Church to Willand Parish Council

This year has ushered a new era for St Mary's in the sense that Simon Talbot moved onto a new ministry and I have stepped in to come alongside the congregation and build on the work of previous Rectors in the Culm Valley Mission Community.

For a large part of the past year, St Mary's has been in the safe hands of our church wardens and PCC who, with the support of our retired clergy, licensed lay minister and willing volunteers, have kept church community life going. This includes things like our weekly Sunday morning services, our popular toddler group, 'Rockers', film nights, Coffee and Chat and other events. Interregnums can be challenging times and I would like to express my thanks to all those who stepped up to serve the community over 2024.

I arrived in October and have been settling into life in this beautiful part of the country. It was lovely to receive a warm welcome from the church family and from the wider community. Starting my role here in the mid autumn meant that Christmas was right on the horizon and it was wonderful to be able to welcome lots of people to our church to celebrate the season. With a mixture of traditional carols, a child-friendly christingle, the midnight Christmas Eve service and of course, Christmas Day, there was a lot going on! It was lovely to see the church full of people and full of life!

Since I arrived, there have been some changes to the way we are running Sunday services. Instead of kicking off at 10am, we now start our worship at 9:45am. Our pattern of services consists of holy communion on the first and third Sundays and we have a more informal service on the second Sunday. Every fourth Sunday we have started running an AAW (all age worship) service in the church hall. It is for everyone, but especially aimed at families. As well as the service times and patterns of service changing, we are also being more creative with our sermon series and have been working our way through John's Gospel in a more systematic way. It has been a joy to see Jesus through the eyes of the beloved disciple.

As I have not been here very long, there is not much more to add, but hopefully this gives you some insight into our last year and a sneak peak into the direction of travel for the year ahead.

Rev Ben Maynard