

**St Mary the Virgin, Thornborough
Blackthorn Chase Benefice
Report for the Annual Parish Assembly
26 March 2025**

Background Information

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or are elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. The following were nominated as PCC members at the 2024:

Rector:	Rev Jaqueline Dove (from 2/09/2020)
Associate Priest	Reverend John King
Church Wardens	Mrs Charlotte Moore and Mr Dave Bury
Treasurer	Mr Stephen Bentley
Secretary	Mrs Mary Parker
Other PCC members	Ray Goodger, David Parker, Gaye Warren, Laura Bentley, and Rachel Proudlove.

Church Services and Pastoral Services

St Mary's Church provides an important place of worship for Christians and continued to provide a monthly Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion and a monthly Joint Church and Chapel Service. We also continued to do Messy Church together with the Chapel aimed at families and young children. The Blackthorn Chase Benefice started a new club for families and young children for all the local villages which takes place in the Nash Village Hall. It was great to have families and children attend our Easter Family Communion which was followed by an Easter Egg hunt and the church was packed full of people of all ages for the Christingle on Christmas Eve. The traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols was also a wonderful service which was made particularly special by the participation of the Lenborough Singers. Other key services included the Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday Service.

The Church and Village

The vision of all the churches in the Blackthorn Chase Benefice is that they be at the heart of village life. St Mary's book corner continues to be a place well used and the monthly Coffee Mornings provide an opportunity to bring people together and is often the first port of call for newcomers to the village. The church was also used during the refurbishment of the village hall by the WI and Parish Council. And we are very pleased the village production of David Copperfield is taking place in the church with the many rehearsals taking place in the church during 2024.

The Thornborough Infant School continue to come to the church once every two weeks for WOW (wonder/wander on Wednesday) and were very involved in the Harvest Festival, decorating the church and singing, 'Great big combine harvester'. The Harvest Festival and tractor parade was also well supported by local farmers and money was raised for the Farming Community Network with all the donated food going to the Buckingham Food Bank.

The Church Fabric

The Church quinquennial took place in 2024 which highlights the work required to safeguard the fabric of the church.

The Churchyard

The Churchyard is a special place for many who appreciate being able to honour and remember their loved ones by spending time by their graves, tending them and leaving flowers. The Churchyard regulations determined by the Oxford Diocese set fairly narrow parameters for how they are to be managed by the individual parishes. There is a difficult balance to achieve between the pastoral needs of those grieving and the long-term concerns (how will the Church yard still serve the parish hundreds of years from now).

St Mary's organised a quiz show to help raise funds to help with the costs associated with managing the churchyard. St Mary's is very reliant on volunteers to help with cutting the grass.

The Oxford Diocesan Synod has declared a climate emergency and set ambitious but clear targets for reaching net zero. With this in line the churchyard management plan recognises that the churchyard can become a sanctuary for the living as well as the dead, with an abundance and diversity of indigenous and naturalized wildlife. This is achieved by designating some parts as 'meadow areas', which are mown less frequently in order to allow wild flowers to grow and set seed. Wildflower meadows are increasingly being used to help with carbon offsetting. If people have any queries or concerns about the churchyard management plan they are welcome to speak to me.

St Mary's PCC remains very grateful for all the support it has received during 2024. It hopes it can remain a key part of village life and continue to play an important role in bringing people together.

Rev Jaqueline Dove